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AUTHOR Duva, Joy; Raley, Gordon
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ABSTRACT

This document describes the population of youth needing special assistance in the transition to adulthood and the special problems they face. It describes the social systems that attempt to serve these youth and examines the deficiencies of current social policies. Promising developments in policy and practice that can offer guidance in finding solutions are discussed. After an introduction, the second section provides a summary of the general characteristics of runaway and foster care populations. The third section describes the systems that address the needs of foster care and runaway youth and inherent systemic problems. Federal policy which addresses the needs of foster care and runaway youth is discussed in the fourth section. The fifth section reviews current programs and activities being carried out by policymakers and service providers. Areas needing further research are described in the sixth section. The final section presents recommendations for needed actions and reforms to strengthen services to out-of-home youth facing transition. The recommendations discussed include amending the Vocational Rehabilitation Act to make foster care youth eligible for post-secondary and college educational assistance, decriminalizing status offenses, extending foster care assistance to youth aged 21, and institutionalizing the use of independent living services as an integral part of the child welfare service continuum. References and two commentaries on the document are included. (ABL)

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Transitional Difficulties of Out-of-Home Youth

by
Joy Duva and Gordon Raley

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Youth and America's Future:
The William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship

YOUTH AND AMERICA'S FUTURE:
THE WILLIAM T. GRANT FOUNDATION COMMISSION ON WORK, FAMILY AND CITIZENSHIP

When William Thomas Grant established the Grant Foundation in 1936, he sought a better understanding of the ways in which individuals adapt to the vicissitudes of life. Touched in his professional life by the importance of good human relationships, Mr. Grant wished to "help children develop what is in them" so they would better "enjoy all the good things the world has to offer them."

Fifty years later, recognizing the special needs of older adolescents in our changing society, the Foundation's Trustees established **Youth and America's Future** with much the same purpose; its charge is to evaluate current knowledge, stimulate new ideas, increase communication among researchers, practitioners and policymakers, and, thus, to help our nation chart a better future for youth.

The Foundation's President, Robert J. Haggerty, M.D., has described the Commission's unique perspective:

"Against a rising chorus of legitimate concern about the many problems facing today's youth, the Foundation has initiated this Commission on Youth and America's Future to speak in a different voice. It will explore the strengths of America's young men and women, their families and the programs and community institutions that serve them. We adopt this approach not to diminish the importance of the problems that exist, but to learn the lessons of success. The Foundation is confident that this effort to look with renewed respect at youth, where it strides as well as where it stumbles, will help forge the links of understanding and mutual responsibility that make our democracy strong."

The publications in this series have been prepared to inform the Commission and to stimulate its thinking. While the Commission does not necessarily endorse the various findings presented, it does encourage their thoughtful consideration in the interests of American youth.

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Executive Assistant

TRANSITIONAL DIFFICULTIES OF OUT-OF-HOME YOUTH

Joy Duva and Gordon Raley

with commentaries by

Eileen M. Pasztor

Peter R. Correia III and Anita Fream

This paper was prepared for Youth and America's Future: The William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship by **Joy Duva** of the Child Welfare League of America and **Gordon Raley** of the American Vocational Association.

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April 1988

TRANSITIONAL DIFFICULTIES OF OUT-OF-HOME YOUTH

Joy Duva and Gordon Raley

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY		4-7
I.	INTRODUCTION	8
II.	OUT-OF-HOME YOUTH AND THEIR PROBLEMS	12
	Foster Care Youth	12
	National Profile	12
	Demographic Characteristics	12
	Reasons for Placement	13
	Multiple Placements	14
	Length of Stay	14
	Living Arrangements	14
	Special Needs	15
	Placement Goals	15
	State Profiles	15
	Adolescent Foster Care and Independent Living	17
	Runaway Youth	21
	Number and Description	21
	Duration of Runaway Event	29
	Resolution	30
	Return Home	30
	Enter Juvenile Justice System	30
	Long-Term Homeless	32
	Reasons for Running Away	33
	Problems with Parents	33
	Problems with School	35
	Problems with Socialization	35
	Summary	35
III.	EXISTING YOUTH SERVICE SYSTEMS FOR OUT-OF-HOME YOUTH	37
	Child Welfare System	37

Description 37
System Problems 38

Juvenile Justice System 40

IV. FEDERAL PUBLIC POLICY AND OUT-OF-HOME YOUTH 43

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act 43
1980 Child Welfare Legislation (P.L. 96-272) 44
Social Security Act Titles IV-B and IV-E 45
Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 46

V. CHOICES FOR FURTHER ACTION 49

Public Policy 49

Foster Care 49
Family Support 49
Juvenile Justice and Runaway Youth 50

Program Models 51

Prevention 51

Peer Counseling/Peer Support 51
Family Preservation 52
Day Treatment 53
Crisis Intervention and Counseling 54

Independent Living Programs 54

VI. AREAS NEEDING ADDITIONAL RESEARCH 58

VII. RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS 59

Research 59
Policy 59
Program 61

VIII. NOTES 65

IX. SOURCES 66

Biographical Sketches 69

Commentaries

Eileen M. Pasztor 70

Peter R. Correia III and Anita Fream 86

TRANSITIONAL DIFFICULTIES OF OUT-OF-HOME YOUTH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While the transition from adolescence to adulthood is trying for most youth, it is especially difficult for those youngsters who must make the transition without the support of a family. Some 40,000 to 50,000 youth run away each year for longer than six months, many never to return home. Another 70,000 youth in the foster care system, 16 years-of-age or older, are likely to be discharged to live on their own. These youth are forced out of state and federal assistance programs at age 18 and left without family or public support. Besides the lack of a family, they may also lack the emotional, educational, intellectual, and social resources necessary for a successful transition to adulthood.

Illustrations, sadly, are plentiful. Reports from the State of New York found numerous examples of former foster care youth on the street, in jail, and even in community-based shelters for the homeless because no independent living alternatives had been arranged. According to another New York study of former foster care children in New York City, male, non-foster care youth were four times more likely to earn a college degree than foster care youth. Even more alarming than this disparity is the generally poor school performance of foster children, confirmed in studies of current and former foster children. Serious deficits in education will affect these youth's career potential and ability to earn a supporting wage.

As a society concerned with helping our youth to become self-sufficient and productive citizens, we must re-examine our policies and practices with regard to these very vulnerable young people. This paper will further describe the population of youth needing special assistance in transitioning to adulthood and the special problems they face. It will describe the social systems that attempt to serve these

youth and examine the deficiencies of current social policies. It will also examine promising developments in policy and practice that can offer guidance in finding solutions. Areas needing additional research will be discussed and recommendations for research, policy, and practice will be suggested.

Section II of the paper provides a summary of the general characteristics of runaway and foster care populations, and descriptive material regarding their reasons for running away and for placement in foster care. It further describes outcomes resulting from current services. Most foster children are placed because of abuse and neglect and most runaways run because of problems with their parents, with abuse and neglect ranking high among contributing factors. Foster children have serious educational deficits affecting their self-esteem and future employment opportunities. Runaways evidence lower academic performance than nonrunners. While most runaways return to their homes, some 40,000 to 50,000 are away for over six months and are likely to be found among the long-term homeless. About 25% of the foster care population, or 70,000 youth, are 16 to 20 years of age. These are the youth in particular in need of service to help make the transition to self-sufficiency.

While studies of former foster children seem to indicate a general sense of well-being for those participating in the studies, several findings give cause for concern. For example, one study indicates that, as compared to the general population, fewer of the adults who were former foster children married; men from foster care backgrounds completed less education than men nationally, and a higher percentage of males and females from foster care were on public assistance.

Section III describes the systems that address the needs of foster care and runaway youth and inherent systemic problems. In recent years the child welfare system has been overwhelmed by increasing reports of child abuse and neglect,

dwindling foster care placement resources, and lack of experienced and well-trained staff. These problems have put a tremendous strain on the system making it increasingly difficult to comprehensively meet the needs of older adolescents. While the juvenile court has attempted to address the problems of runaways, these attempts have been punitive rather than preventive, often contributing more to their problems than solutions. Some, in fact, suggest that involvement with the court system may well contribute to future delinquent behavior on the part of runaways, leading the authors to recommend the decriminalization of status offenses.

Section IV summarizes federal policy which addresses the needs of foster care and runaway youth and highlights the successes and inadequacies. Among federal programs analyzed by the authors are: the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act; the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980; the Social Security Act--Titles IV-B and IV-E; and the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974.

Section V reviews current programs and activities being carried out by policy-makers and service providers to address the needs of foster care and runaway youth. These include proposals to amend existing foster care legislation and to develop public initiatives to increase supports to families. The paper also explores program models deserving replication such as peer counseling, family preservation, day treatment, and crisis intervention. Independent living programs are especially highlighted as a service alternative with particularly strong promise for the future.

Section VI examines areas needing further research. In addition to repeating the National Statistical Survey for Runaway Youth, first conducted in 1976, the paper proposes new longitudinal research to track the experiences of foster care and runaway youth as they transition to adult independence.

In Section VII, the authors recommend a number of much needed actions and

reforms to strengthen services to out-of-home youth facing transition. Primary among these are opening the Vocational Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 93-516) to eligibility for foster care youth, decriminalizing status offenses, such as running away from home, extending foster care assistance to youth aged 21, and institutionalizing the use of independent living services as an integral part of the child welfare service continuum.

I. INTRODUCTION

All American youth face difficulties making the transition to adulthood. For some, these difficulties are almost undetectable other than the telltale signs of awkwardness and anxiety apportioned to each of us as an adolescent rite-of-passage. Others experience varying degrees of conflict and hardship depending on the marital status, personalities, communication skills, and financial situation of their parents. For most youth, however, the institution of the American family, supported by school and community resources, works just fine.

For one group of youngsters, however, the family does not work. Many older foster care youth and runaways do not enjoy the support of this most primary social institution. They must depend, instead, on the intervention of the State to see them through the latter stages of youth development leading toward adult independence. Public policy with regard to these young individuals has been remiss, arguably to the point of neglect. This paper will focus on the problems these special youth face in making the transition to adult self-sufficiency.

There are of course different ways to define that part of the life-cycle referred to as "youth." Persons who reach 18 years of age can vote and fight for their country but, in most states, must be age 21 to buy alcoholic beverages. Some states place 16-year-olds under the jurisdiction of adult courts, while others wait until age 18 to remove youth from juvenile court protection. Some states (and some federal laws) treat youth as adults as soon as they marry and some states allow youth to marry, with the consent of parents, so young that they might better be described as children. At the same time, some individuals, well into their mid-twenties, continue to depend on their families for room, board, and transitional assistance as they finish their education or begin careers.

Age-related definitions marking the line when adulthood begins and childhood

ends are arbitrary and serve the law rather than the individual. The term "youth" has come to identify that transitional, admittedly vague period. This paper will focus on the latter stages of youthful dependency transitioning to the early stages of adult self-sufficiency. It is tempting to use age 18 as a "convenient" denotation for the official end of youth since it is the legal limit of federal juvenile law regarding runaways (the outer limit in all states) and is used by most states as the legal limit for foster care assistance. It is impossible in all states to be a runaway after age 18 and unusual in most states for youngsters over age 18 to remain eligible for public foster care assistance.

This is seen by the authors as unfortunate. While the family works well for most youth, the very reason it works may well be that it recognizes no arbitrary age limit for its involvement. It is fair to say, that, as revered as it is as a social institution, the family would likely not work for most American youth, if each young person were arbitrarily forced out of the family circle upon reaching their 18th birthday. Not even many white, middle- and upper-class kids from two-parent, never divorced families would fare well if forced out, on their own, at age 18, never again to receive assistance or emotional support from their families. The family continues to assist most individuals financially and emotionally well into and often throughout adulthood. Understand this and it becomes suddenly easy to understand the transitional problems of runaway and foster care youth who have no families upon which to depend as they approach adulthood and yet, remarkably, find themselves "forced-out on their own" even from assistance from the State because of arbitrary legal definitions.

"Out-of-home" status not only connotes difficulties with shelter and financial support but with emotional support as well. "Out-of-home" means more than simply "out-of-house"; it means "out-of-family." Foster care youth find themselves in this

status involuntarily, while runaways are more often thought to have placed themselves in the situation (although the causes precipitating their runs may considerably muddy that distinction).

The authors will not recognize any age-related parameter for the end of youth or childhood, although much of the discussion will, of necessity, center on age 18 as an important age-related legal definition. Likewise, while specific definitions for the beginning of youth are also difficult, the authors will view data regarding persons over 10 years of age as pertinent.

Obviously then, this paper will not consider the problems of out-of-home children and infants. Their problems are crucial, and increasingly so, but of a different nature than those of older youngsters, unlikely to be adopted and immediately facing independence. Nor will the authors address the difficulties of homeless youth, still with their families, who lack adequate shelter or housing due to the financial limitations of their families. Again, it is the authors' intent to draw a distinction between "out-of-house" and "out-of-home".

The authors are also not including in this paper's discussion youth who may be placed in out-of-home, community-based facilities or institutions only because of physical, mental, or emotional handicaps. While these youngsters will certainly face transitional difficulties as they move back into the community, those difficulties are more a function of their handicaps rather than lack of a family.

This paper will not focus on the needs of youth placed in correctional facilities because of delinquent offenses that would still be offenses if they were committed by an adult. The offense of running away, while a delinquent act, is not such an offense. Delinquent youth, removed from their homes, also face serious transitioning difficulties due to the stigma attached to their status as offenders and the effects of institutionalization, but their problems are not, at least by definition,

a function of their lack of a family.

The common focus, then, throughout this paper will be on persons in the latter stages of youthful dependency approaching adulthood who, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, must make the transition to independence without the support of a family and, too often, without assistance from the State, once age 18 is reached. They are, primarily, older runaways and foster care youth.

II. OUT-OF-HOME YOUTH AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Foster Care Youth

National Profile

The number of children in foster care dropped dramatically from an estimated 500,000 in 1977 to about 269,000 in 1983. This has been due in large part to system reforms mandated by new child welfare legislation passed by Congress in 1980. It in no way reflects a reduction in problems affecting children and youth. Over the past few years some states have begun to experience an increase in the number of children coming into foster care. In 1984, the foster care population increased by 2.6% to 276,000 children.

The major data base for national statistics on foster care is the Voluntary Cooperative Information System (VCIS, 1984). States voluntarily provide data on their foster care caseload to VCIS for processing and analysis. A major problem with this system, however, is that states use varying definitions of terms and different reporting periods. In the absence of a federally mandated foster care reporting system, states collect whatever information they so choose. Therefore, not all states can report on each data item in the VCIS system. Despite these problems, VCIS data for 1984 does allow us to formulate a very general picture of the children in care today and make assumptions about their needs.

Demographic Characteristics. There are slightly more males than females in the foster care population. Although there are more white children than black, black children are over-represented in the population. This results for several reasons. Potential reporters of child abuse, such as teachers and hospital personnel, may be more reluctant to report suspected child maltreatment if the child is from a white, middle-class family with standing in the community than a child from a lower-income black family. Middle class families can pay for private services,

rather than use the child welfare system. Troubled middle-class white youth, therefore, are likely to be placed in residential treatment centers, private psychiatric hospitals, drug treatment programs or even boarding schools, rather than foster care.

Race/Ethnicity	Percent
White	54%
Hispanic	8%
Black	31%
Other Minority	7%
Total Minority	46%

Approximately half the population are teenagers and the median age is 11 years.

Gender

Female	48%
Male	52%

Age

Less than 1 year	4%
1 to 5 years	21%
6 to 10 years	19%
11 to 15 years	31%
16 to 17 years	17%
18 to 20 years	7%

Median Age 11

Reasons for Placement. The majority of children entering care in 1984 were placed because of maltreatment. More children are removed from their homes because of neglect than because of abuse. Other reasons include the parent's condition or absence, behavior problems of the child, or the child's disability.

Behavior Problems	9%
Disabled	2%
Protective Service	59%
Parent Condition,Absence	15%
Parents Rights Relinquished	1%
Other	14%
Unknown	2%

Multiple Placements. Multiple placements add further disruption and instability to the life of a child who has already experienced the trauma of separation from his own home. About half the children in care are in their original placements, while the other half have experienced more than one placement.

Original Placement	48%
One Additional Placement	22%
2-4 Additional Placements	21%
5 or more Placements	7%
Unknown	1%

Length of Stay. Research, such as that done by David Fanshel et. al. (1978), has shown that the longer children remain in care the less likely that they will return home. The median number of months children remain in foster care according to VCIS data as of 1984 was 20.

Less than 1 month	5%
1-5 months	18%
6-11 months	16%
12-17 months	11%
18-23 months	9%
24-29 months	6%
30-35 months	5%
36-59 months	11%
5 years +	18%

Living Arrangements. The large majority of foster children reside in a family environment. Generally the more disturbed children are placed in group care settings.

FC/Adoption Home	68%
Own Home	7%
Group Home	9%
Emergency Shelter	1%
Child Care Facility	9%
Independent Living	1%
Other	4%

Special Needs. Approximately 22% of the children in care were reported to have some type of special need. Special needs generally include physical, mental and emotional handicapping conditions.

Placement Goals. The plan for about half the children in foster care is to return to their families. About 10% have a plan of independent living. Yet another 18% are in long-term foster care and should also be receiving assistance in planning for their independence. Although some of these youth will enter the adult service system, planning should be geared to preparing them to live in the least restrictive and most community-based type of setting. Preparation and planning for living as independently as possible should be a part of their foster care experience. Therefore, approximately 28% of the foster care population is projected to require preparation for transitioning to adulthood.

Reunify	50%
Adoption	15%
Independence	10%
Long-term Foster Care	18%
Unknown	8%

State Profiles

State profiles of foster children in New York and California are similar to the national profile in demographic characteristics of the children and provide additional information on their problems and special needs.

An extensive research effort was conducted in New York State (Ingalls, Hatch, and Meservey 1984) to ascertain the characteristics of children in out-of-home care supervised by six different state agencies. The survey was conducted between November 1980 and June 1981.

The total number of cases sampled was 2,782. Of these, 1,147 cases were foster children in the custody of the Department of Social Services (DSS). These

children exhibited significant problems in education, mental health, and socialization.

The New York study shows that about 33% of the DSS foster children exhibited some type of behavior problem ranging from mild to severe. About 40% of the DSS foster children were categorized as having psychiatric symptoms including withdrawal, thought disorders, depression, paranoia, suicide attempts, self abuse, eating disorders, bizarre behavior, hyperactivity.

School performance was extremely poor. Low reading scores were generally characteristic of these children. Only 32% were reading at or above grade level, 29% were reading one to two years below grade level, 16% were three to four years below grade level, 10% were five to six years below grade level, and 13% were more than six years below grade level. Math scores were even lower than reading scores. Only 20% of the children were at or above their grade level in math. Fifty percent were one to four years below grade level and 30% were five or more years below grade level. Approximately 10% of the children were mentally retarded and 7% had another type of developmental disability such as epilepsy, cerebral palsy or neurological impairment.

The California Association of Services for Children conducted a study (Fitzharris, 1985) of 7,550 children in group care between July 1982 and June 1984. Of these, 2,844 children were in the custody of the Department of Social Services. The profiles show a picture of very vulnerable and disturbed children.

Only 16% of the DSS foster children had no prior placements; 41% had one or two prior placements; 27% had two to four prior placements and 15% had five or more prior placements. A range of physical and psychological conditions were diagnosed such as withdrawal, depression, bizarre behavior, extreme dependence, hyperactivity, compulsive behavior, psychosis and eating disorders. Presenting problems included substance abuse (11%), suicidal (12%), sexual acting out (17%),

attacks on people (14%), attacks on property (30%), stealing (17%). Significant problems were found in the families: 40% were physically abusive and 19% sexually abusive; drug or alcohol abuse was found to exist in about one quarter of the families; child neglect was found in 46% of the families.

The picture that emerges from the state studies shows a population of children and youth coming from very dysfunctional families and experiencing significant educational deficits and serious emotional and behavioral problems.

Adolescent Foster Care and Independent Living

Several recent studies have examined the extent to which adolescents in foster care are prepared to transition to independence and their experience after leaving the foster care system.

A study on independent living services conducted by Westat, Inc. (Cook and Ansell, 1986) examined characteristics of a sample of 297 adolescents in four states who left foster care between September 1984 and August 1985. Case records were reviewed to identify skill level, support systems available and presenting problems of adolescents discharged from care. The study focused primarily on obtaining historical information from the case records. Outcome data on the success of the transition from foster care was lacking.

The adolescents averaged four different living arrangements during their stay in substitute care. About half of the adolescents had at least one runaway episode while in foster care. The initial case plan for half of these youth was to return home.

At the time of discharge only 28% had completed high school. About 60% had held a job while in care. It was also found that those who held a job had completed more education than those who had not. This finding is hardly surprising and gives emphasis to the importance of education in finding employment.

The study found that 53% of the mothers and 72% of the fathers did not visit the youth during the last year of their placement. This finding points out the lack of social supports youth have at discharge and the need to develop options for continuing support after youth leave foster care.

The four states studied were selected in order to obtain information on the range of available independent living services and to insure inclusion of youth who had received such services. Despite a bias in that more transitional services may be available for youth in these states, the results still show only minimal preparation of youth for independence.

- Although three of the four states had policies that allowed youth to live on their own while still in the custody of the state, only 15% of the youth had been afforded this experience, and most were from one state.

- Of 18 potential independent living services, the most prevalent received was psychological counseling (45%). Only four other services had been provided to at least 35% of the youth including information about relationships and social skills (39%), job search information (39%), sex and birth control information (37%), and budgeting skills (35%).

The Citizens Committee For Children of New York, Inc. conducted a study of adolescents in the New York City foster care system to determine how well prepared they were to leave care, what was being done to prepare them for independent living, and what their plans were after discharge. The sample included 208 cases of adolescents who had a designated goal of independent living.

For about half of those youth nearing their discharge date, there were no plans in the record about which employment or educational goals the youth would be pursuing. Also half the youth had no plan in their record for what their living arrangements would be. For 92% of the youth nearing discharge, there was no information regarding continued health coverage such as medicaid or private insurance.

The study points out various problems and issues both in the foster care

system and the preparation process:

- Youth in the study had significant educational deficits. Although the academic deficiencies are known, little is done to remedy the problem. A coordinated effort is lacking between the child welfare and educational systems to address the problem systematically;

- Staff turnover in child welfare agencies presents a significant problem in providing continuity for youth in developing and implementing preparation plans. Only half of the youth had the same worker for 12 or more months;

- Aftercare services are often hit or miss. Although state policy requires post-discharge services to be delivered or monitored for a minimum of three months, contacts with the youth depend on whether the worker has time, whether the youth calls, and if the worker is still there.

A study conducted by Festinger (1983) of youth discharged from foster care in New York City in 1975 confirms the problem of educational deficits. Approximately half of the youth were reported to have moderate to severe learning problems at discharge from foster care. It was found that learning problems at discharge were clearly associated with a poorer sense of well-being as an adult. The study suggests that it is not the learning problems themselves that led to a more negative self-image but rather that educational deficits limited options for employment which negatively influenced self assessment. Other findings of interest included:

- Multiple placements during childhood were associated with the presence of psychological problems at discharge;

- About 34% of the young adults in the sample were discharged with a fairly serious health, social and emotional, educational problem or combination of these;

- About 30% of the young adults were uncertain about who they could count on for help although many had someone to count on for advice;

- About 32% of the males and 4.9% of the females had been arrested on charges of having committed a misdemeanor or felony. These youth at discharge showed more limited educational achievements and had more problems at discharge than those youth who did not get into trouble with the law after discharge.

The Festinger study indicates that adults from the foster care population in

many ways do not differ much from the general population. Festinger's data was compared with national surveys of the general population. The adults from the foster care population were about as satisfied as the general population with the number and quality of their friendships. Both populations assessed their health status similarly. On average, the young adults from foster care were similar to young adults nationally in their sense of happiness and satisfaction with life as a whole.

It should be noted, however, that the study focused on a sample of former foster children from New York City, discharged in 1975, who had been in care for at least the preceding five years. Of a potential 600 persons meeting these specifications, 227 had been located and agreed to participate in the study. Twenty-one possible respondents were considered too emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, or physically impaired to be interviewed. The study shows somewhat of a bias toward those who made successful transition and enjoyed a decent quality of life, since those are the respondents more likely to be located and to agree to participate. Those former foster youth who are destitute, homeless, or in prisons would be those not likely to be located or included in the study.

Significant differences existed in that fewer of the adults from foster care were married; black adults from foster care had a lower employment rate than black adults in the general population; and, men from foster care completed less education than men nationally. A startling statistic reveals that only 2.3% of the males from foster care had a college degree as compared to 22.1% of young men from the general population. A higher percentage of males and females from foster care were receiving public assistance than were males and females in the general population.

In a study of former foster children from West Virginia (Jones and Moses,

1984), over half the respondents said that no one had helped them make plans for living on their own. About half said they had some contact with their social worker after discharge, but usually self-initiated just to keep in touch.

Runaway Youth

Numbers and Description

According to the F.B.I.'s Uniform Crime Report, an estimated 161,200 persons under age 18 ran away from home in 1985 (UCR, 1985, 164)[1]. These nationally compiled police statistics provide a consistent, year-to-year record of runaway arrests and there is a real temptation to depend upon them as a barometer measuring the incidence of runaway behavior. But there are real problems with police data, which reflect broader difficulties in determining the number and description of runaway occurrences in this nation.

First, for a youngster to show up in the Uniform Crime Report as a runaway, that youngster must be a juvenile--that is, for the purposes of the law, they must be under the jurisdiction of the juvenile law in the state in which they reside or the state to which they run. That usually means they are under 18 years of age, but in some states it can mean under age 17 years of age or even under age 16. Any person 18 years of age or older leaving home without parental permission cannot be counted as a runaway since, in all states, eighteen-year olds fall under the jurisdiction of adult courts and therefore cannot be arrested since it is not an adult offense. While 18 year-olds running away (as well as 68 year-olds) cannot be arrested, persons three months younger can be arrested, brought before the court, and incarcerated. Running away from home, from the legal perspective, is a status offense because of the status of the person's age committing the act. Youth are treated more harshly than adults by the law presumably for their own protection.[2]

No statistics on runaways 18 years or older will be found in the Uniform

Crime Reports because persons that age cannot be arrested. In the eyes of the law, the problem of runaway youth ends with their 18th birthday. So, at this point in the history of social efforts to work with runaway youth, policy-makers have limited themselves almost exclusively to the legal definition of the event even though few would deny that some 18- or 19 year-olds may be considerably less mature and more vulnerable than some 16- or 17-year olds.

Secondly and obviously, for a juvenile to appear as a runaway in the FBI reports they must be apprehended and arrested. Those who are apprehended and diverted to runaway shelters or child welfare services do not exist as far as police records are concerned. Those who remain on the streets unapprehended--those who don't get caught--also will not appear. Demographic descriptions of runaways as a subgroup become increasingly difficult.

Thirdly, if a youth is to have a chance of being arrested for leaving home without parental permission, someone must report the offense. Youngsters who are pushed out or whose parents are not concerned may not be reported as runaways and may be unrepresented in police statistics.

Having now qualified the usefulness of F.B.I. statistics, are they totally without value in assessing the extent of runaway youth behavior? No. In fact, with regard to quantifying serious runaway incidents, they are quite useful. Children and youth who are reported as runaways may be seen as being more at risk by their parents. The fact that they are apprehended may also indicate they have been on the run longer and have been unsuccessful in finding alternative living arrangements with friends, relatives, or through runaway shelters or other halfway house programs.

F.B.I. statistics are also helpful in that they provide a consistent body of year-to-year data which can be useful in comparison. What do the Uniform Crime Reports tell us about runaways or at least the juveniles who are arrested for

running away? Across the nation there were 68.9 runaway arrests for every 100,000 population (UCR 165). The rate was lowest in the Northeastern states (47.7) and highest in the Midwestern states (81.5).

Runaway Arrests, Number, Rate, and Percentage By Region, 1985

Region	Number	Rate/100,000	Percentage
Northeastern	20,010	47.7	14.3
Midwestern	37,015	81.5	26.5
Southern	52,120	73.2	37.2
Western	30,825	69.4	22.0
Total United States	139,970[3]	68.9	100.0

Interestingly, the rate of arrest for runaways is not highest in large cities (those with populations of 250,000 or more), as popularly perceived but rather in smaller cities, where the rate was 101.9 per 100,000. Large cities had a rate of 67.9, slightly below the national average. The smallest rate was found in rural areas (30.9) at about half the national average (UCR 1985, 167). The higher arrest rates in medium and smaller cities may reflect fewer diversion alternatives in those cities than in larger urban areas.

Runaway Arrests, Number, Rate, and Percentage By Population Group

Populations Group	Number	Rate	Percentage
Cities			
250,000 and over	26,016	67.9	18.6
100,000 to 249,999	16,238	93.5	11.6
50,000 to 99,999	19,533	101.9	14.0
25,000 to 49,999	18,388	93.2	12.4
10,000 to 24,999	17,483	74.8	12.5
9,999 and less	11,267	57.4	8.0
Counties			
Suburban	24,325	61.9	17.4
Rural	7,732	30.9	5.5
Suburbs[4]	56,748	67.6	40.5
Total United States	139,970[3]	68.9	100.0

Arrest rates for runaways have dropped by about 27% since 1976 (UCR, 168), perhaps reflecting reforms initiated because of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974[5]. The decrease over that 10-year period was consistent between males and females. Interestingly, the rates of arrests for runaways from 1981 to 1984 actually rose by 17% perhaps reflecting a shift in police practices over the first term of the Reagan Administration away from the use of diversion alternatives and deinstitutionalization. Many of the reforms included in the Juvenile Justice Act with regard to the use of nonsecure alternatives were openly opposed by Presidential appointees though maintained by Congress.

In 1985, about 57% of those arrested were girls compared to 43% for boys. This proportion is about the same as ten years before in 1976 (UCR 1985, 171).

Total Runaway Arrests for Males and Females By Age, 1985

Age	Males	Percent	Females	Percent
Under 10	1,554	1.1	652	0.5
10-12	5,842	4.2	4,380	3.1
13-14	18,650	13.3	28,566	20.4
15	15,149	10.8	22,990	16.4
16	12,645	9.1	16,890	12.1
17	5,858	4.2	6,794	4.8
Total Under 18	59,698	42.7	80,272	57.3
Total Under 15	26,046	18.6	33,598	24.0

Of all runaways arrested in 1985, about three of four were white (UCR, 185). A complete racial-ethnic breakdown follows:

Racial-ethnic Group	Percent
White	77%
Hispanic	8%
Black	13%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%
Asian or Pacific Islands	1%

So, in summary, of the more than 160,000 arrests of runaways estimated to have been made in 1985, surprisingly most were of girls, the only delinquent offense aside from prostitution where this is the case, and the highest rates were found not in large, urban centers, as one might expect, but in small- to medium- size cities. Most arrests were of white youth, with the racial/ethnic division being fairly representative of the population in general. The peak years of arrest seemed to be in the 15-year-old group with runaway activity seemingly declining as the teenagers grow older.

Knowing, however, the limitations of arrest data, immediate questions arise. As already mentioned, does the fact that large, urban centers seem to have lower rates of arrest than all but the smallest cities actually reflect the presence of more diversion alternatives in those areas and increased police sophistication rather than lower rates of runaway activity? Are there fewer runaways in large cities or do the police in those areas simply take the runaway to shelter facilities instead of police headquarters? Are there really more girls running away from home, or does that simply reflect the fact that they are seen as more vulnerable by their parents and therefore are more likely reported to police as runners? Are girls simply easier to spot and apprehend on the street than boys? Does the incidence of running away really peak at age 15 or does that again simply reflect more parental concern and easier apprehension on the street of younger teenagers?

Traditionally, data on runaways has come from police records, the Uniform Crime Reports, reports from runaway shelters, and records from agencies such as the Traveler's Aid Society. Much of this data was then extrapolated to reach national estimates. The problem remains that all assumptions about runaway behavior have been based on reports of runaways who eventually came under the jurisdiction of the courts or social service alternatives.

There was one exception. This was the National Statistical Survey on Runaway Youth conducted in 1976 through the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare by the Opinion Research Corporation in Princeton, New Jersey, as required by Part B of Title III, (known as the Runaway Youth Act,) of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-415.). It mandated that a comprehensive statistical survey be carried out to define the major character- istics of the runaway youth population and to determine the areas of the country most affected. It is regrettable that the study has not been updated since that time for it gives perhaps the truest picture of runaway youth activity of any research done before or since.

The Survey was conducted in two parts. First, using a nationwide probability sample, 85,000 telephone screening interviews were completed in order to measure the incidence and prevalence of runaway behavior among youth households during the previous year and to obtain preliminary descriptive information about the runaway households, runaway youth, and runaway events. Then households where there had been a runaway incident were identified for the purpose of conducting in-depth personal interviews with the youth and one of his or her parents.

In the second phase of the survey, interviews were conducted with the national probability sample of 224 runaways identified earlier during the screening interviews. These youngsters had all returned home and were identified throughout the survey report as "Returned Runaways." The parents of these "Returned Runaways" were interviewed as well. Then interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of 411 runaways who had not returned home at the time of the interview. These were identified as "Nonreturners." The Nonreturners were interviewed in 40 metropolitan areas nationwide; about half were housed in or associated with runaway shelters and half were still on the street. Both runaway

groups were compared to a national probability sample of youth who had never runaway (Nonrunners). Nonrunners and their parents were interviewed in the same neighborhoods, on a one-for-one basis as Returned Runaways.

For the purpose of the survey, a runaway was defined as "a youth between the ages of 10 and 17, inclusive, who has been absent from home without parental/guardian permission for at least overnight" (HEW, 1976, i). Note that the youngster did not have to come in contact with or be labeled by the police or a social service agency to be defined as a runaway.

The incidence of overnight runaways was found to be 1.7% of the youth population aged 10-17 or between 519,500 and 635,000 youth (HEW, 1976, i). The incidence of runaway households, that is, households experiencing a runaway event was found to be higher in the West (3.8%) and North Central States (3.6%) than in the South (2.7%) or Northeast (2.2%) (HEW, 1976, ii). This was generally consistent with UCR estimates.

But rather than finding runaway events peaking at age 15 as UCR data indicated, the National Statistical Survey found that 15-, 16-, and 17-year-olds accounted for four out of five instances of running away during 1975. The modal age for runners was 16 years-of-age (HEW, 1976, 25). It must be remembered, however, that by definition, 18- or 19-year olds leaving home without parental permission were not counted as runners. Thus, again, the legal definition of a runaway dominated the survey's age documentation.

Slightly more than half of all runners were male. This finding directly contradicted UCR findings and traditional belief, still in vogue today. Running away had always been seen as a girl's offense; instead, it is likely that girls tend to be arrested for running away more often than boys. It is also likely that, as a contributing factor to arrest, parents tend to report runaway events by their

daughters to police more frequently than such events by their sons. They may see their daughters as more vulnerable.

As far as racial or ethnic differences were concerned, the rates of running were not significantly different for Blacks (3.2%) or Whites (2.9%), but the rate for Hispanic youth tended to be higher (4.6%). Rates of running for children from blue collar and white collar workers were identical (3.0%).

Distance traveled during a runaway event is one way of gauging the youth's vulnerability while away from home and therefore the seriousness of the event. This information was unavailable from UCR data. The National Statistical Survey found that two of ten runaway youth traveled less than one mile from home; more than half traveled less than ten miles.

Distance Traveled by Runner	Percent
Less than one mile	21.1%
One to 10 miles	31.4%
10 to 50 miles	12.3%
50 miles or more	17.5%
Don't know	14.3%
Refused	3.4%

The Survey found the following incidence of runaway events by the size of the area or population group from which runners ran. Corresponding to UCR data, small towns showed an incidence of running comparable to large cities.

Community Size	Incidence
City	3.4%
Suburb	2.8%
Small Town	3.4%
Rural Area	2.4%

With regard to family composition, the National Statistical Survey found what appeared to be a bimodal relationship. Runaway incidents peaked in single-parent households and in households containing eight or more family members (HEW, 1976, 10). The rate for single-parent households was 5.1% and that for households of

eight or more was 7.2%. The survey report concludes:

> The ideal household size, it would seem, in terms of fewest reported runaways, would be households containing a total of four persons. In such households, the reported incidence rate is only 1.9%.

The lowest income households tended to have the highest rates of running away, but the relationship was not consistent throughout income ranges. Households in lower-middle income groups reported less runaway events than households in upper-middle income households (HEW, 1976,11).

Income of Household	Incidence
Under $7,000	4.2%
$7,000 to $9,999	3.5%
$10,000 to $14,999	2.6%
$15,000 to $19,999	3.7%
$20,000 and over	2.8%

The impact of family income was further underscored by another finding of the Survey. While only about 4% of heads of households interviewed were unemployed, the rate for runners from those households was 8.3%--about twice its representational amount (HEW, 1976, 15) showing the impact of family economics on runaway events and perhaps indicating a greater incidence of youth who were pushed out of their homes because of economic pressure.

Duration of Runaway Event

In addition to distance traveled, the seriousness of any given runaway event can also be gauged by the duration of time the youth was away from home. While the National Statistical Survey estimated that more than half a million youth ran away at least over night, on three of five occasions the young person returned home within three days (HEW, 1976, 20). It is, however, also important to note one in 20 were still missing at the time of the interview.

Length of Duration	% of Runaway Events
One day or less	41.7%
Up to three days	18.9%
Three days up to one week	10.0%
One week up to two weeks	8.2%
Two weeks up to one month	5.8%
One month up to six months	6.8%
Six months up to one year	1.9%
Still gone	5.3%
Refused to answer	1.4%

From the interviews conducted with runaways themselves, the National Statistical Survey reported that of Returned Runaways, most were gone less than a week. (HEW, II, 1976, iv). Among Nonreturners, the average youth had been gone more than a month, and one in nine had been away a year or longer. Half of Nonreturners expected never to return home.

Resolution

Return Home. It is interesting that the National Statistical Survey found that in about half the instances, almost half the parents (49.8%) did not consider the action of the youth to be running away (HEW, 1976, 22). In only about three of 10 instances did parents who were interviewed report having called the police. In these situations where police were not contacted, it is safe to assume that while the child may have left home without the parents' permission, the parents nevertheless knew where the youngster was (or did not care). Most of these young people returned home on their own, without intervention in less than three days time.

Enter the Juvenile Justice System. What about serious runners? Some 160,000 are arrested. These youngsters come under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. Many are simply returned home to the parents' custody. Others are turned over to child protective or child welfare services or to runaway shelters. In the mid-1970's, many of those who could not return home could have been placed by the court in

secure correctional facilities. That practice, with regard to runaways at least, has largely been discontinued thanks to Juvenile Justice Act requirements to remove status offenders from secure correctional and detention facilities. Yet, short-term holding in secure detention facilities, and adult jails, municipal and lock-ups is still in practice.

Statistics on what happens to youth while under the jurisdiction of the court are unavailable in any kind of national summary. Statistics, however, are kept by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on shelter facilities funded by the Runaway Youth Act. Of these more serious runners who receive shelter through these programs, 67,500 in 1985, the following dispositions were reported (HHS, 1985).

Case Disposition	Percent
Home of Parents or Guardian	52.4%
Other Stable Situation	12.7%
On the Street	6.3%
Foster Home	6.3%
Relative's Home	6.2%
Group Home	6.0%
Friend's Home	3.3%
Other Institution/School	2.2%
Correctional Institution	1.7%
Mental Hospital	1.4%
Independent Living	1.3%
Boarding School	0.2%

In their relationship with the law, the National Statistical Survey found that youth who ran away were more likely than Nonrunners to have been found delinquent prior to running (although this was self-reported delinquency)--26% of Nonreturners and 20% of Returned Runaways compared to only 8% of Nonrunners. Being a runaway, however, was the most frequently mentioned offense by Nonreturners. But nearly one of five Nonreturners admitted supporting themselves while running or living on the street by stealing (11%), panhandling (4%), or sex (3%). (Before jumping to conclusions about runaway delinquent behavior, it should

also be noted that 18% of the Nonreturners worked to support themselves.)

Here, with regard to the distinction between criminal offenses and status offenses committed by juveniles, another limitation of police records are seen when estimating the national number of runaways. We do not know how many arrests for criminal delinquent acts may be attributed to runaways who were charged as delinquents rather than status offenders and therefore not counted as runaways.

Long-term Homeless. While there is no current, reliable research which estimates the number of runners who become long-term homeless, estimates are possible. From the National Statistical Survey, it is estimated that between 520,000 to 635,000 ran away at least overnight in 1975. Of that number, the Survey estimated that about 7.2% of these youth had been gone longer than six months. Thus, in 1975, between 37,400 and 45,700 runaway youth might be described as long-term homeless. The Census Bureau estimates that in that same period of time, the youth population between the ages of 10 and 18 dropped by about 7% (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1980-1984). All thing being equal, one could estimate then, that in 1985, between 34,800 and 42,500 runaways might be considered long-term homeless.

Of course all things are not equal. What such estimates do not measure is the impact that the runaway shelters funded by HHS through, Title III of the Juvenile Justice Act may have had. In 1975, they were in their infancy but now they are almost 300 strong. On the other hand, estimates reflect neither the impact that more recent economic stress may have had on youth being pushed from their homes nor the affect of childhood poverty, which has risen since 1975. One failing of the National Survey was that it did not measure the incidence and prevalence of youth being asked to leave the home by parents or being "pushed out." This underlines the need to have another national survey, which includes questions about "pushouts", commissioned and replicated by Congress as part of the Title III--Runaway Youth

Act during its reauthorization in 1988.

Reasons for Running Away

Problems with Parents. As referenced earlier, the second stage of the National Statistical Survey consisted of interviews with runaways and nonrunaways from similar backgrounds and their parents. As might be expected, problems with parents were listed by youth as the primary reasons for running away. Runaways, especially Nonreturners, revealed a high degree of discouragement in the way they were treated by their parents (HEW, 1976, ii). Negative family dynamics (as perceived by the youth) which were found to be correlates of runaway seriousness were:

- o parents say unpleasant things about the youth to other people;
- o parents call the youth names he or she does not like;
- o the father or stepfather drinks too much;
- o the youth is beaten by the father or stepfather.

But the survey did not stop with correlates of runaway behavior; it also looked for correlates of nonrunaway behavior. Positive family dynamics which were correlates of not running away were:

- o parents get along well with each other;
- o parents are satisfied with the things the youth does;
- o parents talk with the youth about things that are important to the youth.

The major differences in child rearing practices between parents of Returned Runaways and parents of Nonrunners, gained from parent interviews, involved:

- o the amount of assistance offered by parents;
- o the amount of communication with the youth;
- o the amount of emotional comfort offered to the youth;
- o the amount happiness expressed by the parents about being with the youth.

Parents of Nonrunners were found, in the Survey, to be far more likely to be protective of their children. They were more likely to accompany them when they went somewhere and refused to let them roam around. Surprisingly, parents of Returned Runaways worried more often than parents of Nonrunners that their children could not take care of themselves; but they were also more likely to hold it up to the children, for example suggesting that other children behaved better. Parents of Nonrunners were more likely to offer help to their children, for example helping with school work when the child failed to understand it.

Communication was a key. Parents of non-runners were more likely to feel that their children could come to them to discuss anything. They were also more likely to express comfort to the child when the child was experiencing trouble.

Parents of Nonrunners tended to be happier when with their children than were the parents of Returned Runaways. They more often said nice things about their children and were more likely to share time and activities, such as hobbies and handicrafts. Parents of Nonrunners were also more likely to be happy with themselves. In particular, mothers of Returned Runaways were more likely to feel they were failures.

In short, the Survey found that the main differences between Returned Runaway and Nonrunners households revolved around factors of togetherness, communication, and respect for the dignity of the child. There were fewer instances of child abuse, name calling, or emotional abuse.

It is important to note that among Nonreturners, those who must be assumed to be the most serious runners, the most important secondary reasons for leaving home after "not getting along with parents", were physical abuse and problems relating to school. It is equally important, however, not to compartmentalize causes. Problems at school may well have their origin in the home, especially

where abuse is involved. Likewise, problems at school can contribute to conflict in the home which may spark disruption and abuse.

Problems with School. As might be expected, the National Statistical Survey found that youth who did not run away tended to do better in school than those who ran. Based on a 4 point grading scale: Nonrunners held a 2.68 average, Returned Runaways held a 2.12 average and Nonreturners a 2.22 average (HEW, II, 1976, iii). Runaways, especially Nonreturners, were characterized as having changed schools significantly more often than Nonrunners.

Youngsters in both runaway groups reported many more unexcused absences than Nonrunners. According to the survey, peer influence was a factor:

- Nonreturners felt they were more excluded by their peers in the school situation while Nonrunners felt the least excluded;
- far more runways than nonrunners expected to quit school as soon as they reached legal age;
- the academic expectations and aspirations of runaways were significantly lower than those of Nonrunners.

Problems with Socialization. In exploring involvement by youth in community activities outside the school, the significant finding was the comparative lack of group membership in youth organizations observed among runaways (HEW, II, 1976, 47). About 56% of Nonreturners and 62% of Returned Runaways, compared to 44% of Nonrunners, claimed no group affiliation.

Summary

Questions raised by describing the amount and type of runaway behavior are relevant mainly in terms of their degree of seriousness. That is at the crux of determining an appropriate level of public intervention. With regard to runaway youth, most require no official intervention whatsoever. More than half, if left alone, will be back home, on their own, after one night away and a majority will go no farther than 10 miles from home. There are, however, some 40,000 to 50,000

youth each year who are likely not to return home for six months or longer. Given the age ranges of runaways, which peaks at 16 and 17, many can be expected not to return at all. This is where a public policy emphasis needs to be placed.

Official action should not be punitive. If anything, the offense of running away from home should be decriminalized and placed within the jurisdiction of the child welfare system. This does not mean that police could not be used to locate runaways who were reported missing. Police are currently used to locate adult missing persons but adults are not arrested for being missing. Children and youth do not need to be arrested either.

For older runaways, the criminalization of their offense is almost non-relevant since turning age 18 will "decriminalize" the offense for them. The current juvenile legal system is punitive rather than preventive and may well drive serious runaways underground, away from help and into illicit activity and danger. The stigma of being labeled as a delinquent may well give them more problems as they transition to adulthood than having no official involvement at all concerning their runaway event and return home. But aside from punitive legal entanglement, what does public policy have to offer?

III. EXISTING YOUTH SERVICE SYSTEM FOR OUT-OF-HOME YOUTH

Child Welfare System

Description

Child Welfare services are society's expression of concern and assumption of responsibility for vulnerable children and youth. They are designed to help and support parents to fulfill their parental role, as well as to provide care and protection for those children whose parents are unable to assume the responsibilities of parenting (CWLA, 1982).

Child welfare services are defined in federal legislation as those services directed to achieve the following purposes:

- Protecting and promoting the welfare of all children, including handicapped, homeless, dependent or neglected children;
- Preventing or remedying, or assisting in the solution of problems which may result in the neglect, abuse, exploitation, or delinquency of children;
- Preventing the unnecessary separation of children from their families by identifying family problems, assisting families in resolving their problems and preventing breakup of the family, where the prevention of child removal is desireable and possible;
- Restoring to their families children who have been removed, by the provision of services to the child and the families;
- Placing children in suitable adoptive homes, in cases where restoration to the biological family is not possible or appropriate; and
- Assuring adequate care of children away from their homes, in cases where the child cannot be returned home or placed in adoption.

Child welfare services are delivered by both public and private social service agencies. The traditional categories of child welfare services include:

- Services to Children in their Own Home--services are offered as an enrichment to children and their families to enhance their functioning as a family unit and support parents in their child rearing role, improving family and community life for children, and facilitating the development and social functioning of children (CWLA Standards for Services to Children in Their Own Homes).
- Protective Services--The purpose of protective service should be to

discharge community responsibility for safeguarding the rights and protecting the welfare of children whose parents are unable to do so; and to see that neglected and abused children are protected against further experiences and conditions detrimental to healthy growth and development, and that children receive the kind of care that will provide the essentials for their well-being and development at home or in appropriate substitute care (CWLA Standards for Protective Services).

- o Foster Care Service--Foster care is the child welfare service that provides substitute care for a planned period for a child when his own family cannot care for him for a temporary or extended period, and when adoption is either not yet possible or not desirable (CWLA Standards for Foster Care).

- o Adoption Service--is a social service provided by the community or state, through an organized social agency, for children who cannot be reared by their natural parents and who need and can benefit by new and permanent family ties established through legal adoption. (CWLA Standards for Adoption Service)

Most child welfare service programs are organized categorically reflecting the groupings defined above. Some agencies, however, have moved to a more generic model only separating the protective investigation function from a generic family service function that incorporates the remaining service categories.

The impact of shrinking social service dollars has been felt most acutely by programs designed to support families and prevent crises and more serious problems from developing. The main entry point into the child welfare system today is through protective services as a response to reports of child abuse and neglect. Without a strong network of family support programs available in communities it is no wonder that child abuse and neglect, often a result of unresolved stresses and problems in a family, has skyrocketed.

System Problems

Newspapers across the country have been chronicling the growing crisis in child welfare. The San Francisco Chronicle has reported on the increasing numbers of reports of child abuse and neglect. The Wall Street Journal has cited the decreasing pool of foster parents and the difficulty of recruiting new foster parents

as a major problem. The New York Times, in a three-part series, reported on how a system in chaos, with an 86% staff turnover rate, impacts on the lives of foster children.

The problems of the child welfare system are not only the concern of social workers and agency administrators. Increasingly these problems are shared openly with the community with the recognition that solutions depend on community involvement. Over the past five years reports of child abuse and neglect have increased dramatically placing a strain on Child Protective Services. After several years of decreasing caseloads in foster care, the trend has reversed as a result of the rise in abuse and neglect cases. At the same time that foster care caseloads began to rise, foster care resources were dwindling. Foster parents have been aging out of the system and are not being replaced by younger couples. With more women entering the workforce, and with increasing divorce rates, fewer traditional families remain who have the emotional capability, space, and financial resources to take in foster children. Also the children coming into foster care today are often from very damaged families and have a range of emotional and behavioral problems which could strain the most stable foster family. Fewer foster parents are able or willing to care for such disturbed children.

Foster care workers are faced every day with the dilemma of where to place the children coming into foster care. Adolescents coming into the foster care system are especially difficult to place. Foster parents are fearful of drug use and sexually acting out and of a negative influence on their own children. Shelters and group homes are operating at full capacity.

Workers facing the frustrations of high caseloads, inadequate placement resources, inadequate treatment resources, inadequate salaries and poor working enrollments have been opting out of the system. High turnover rates cause further

disruption to a troubled system. In order to fill vacancies, agencies find it necessary to hire staff that may have no experience or training in social services Untrained staff, if not very closely supervised, can cause further problems by exercising poor judgment in case decision-making. If a child is hurt as a result of poor casework, the agency and worker may find themselves facing a lawsuit, and the targets of very negative media coverage. The cycle continues as staff morale declines and experienced workers leave the system.

When a system is besieged by so many problems, every part of the system is effected. The ability of an agency to deliver effective services to youth transitioning from foster care will be affected by the overall stability of the agency. It is unrealistic to expect quality services to prepare foster care youth to live independently if issues such as qualifications and training of staff, qualifications and training of foster parents, caseload size, and reimbursement rates for foster parents and group care providers are not resolved.

Juvenile Justice System

The present day juvenile court can be traced to the 1890's when a distinction was made between juvenile cases and those of adult criminals. The juvenile court would act under the principle of parens patriae, stepping in to take the place of parents and family, with regard to the correction of youth who went beyond the law.

While intended as a protective reform, the creation of the juvenile court as a substitute for the supervision of the family brought children under its realm who had not run afoul of the law, but who instead had committed offenses that would not be offenses if they were adults. Runaways were such a category of children.

A wide majority of states now define delinquency under bifurcated statutes. The delinquency classification is limited to those acts committed by juveniles which

would be crimes if committed by adults. Juveniles whose behavior is not criminal but anti-social are labeled as "children in need of supervision" (CHINS) or "persons in need of supervision" (PINS).

Even before passage of the Juvenile Justice Act of 1974, the difficulties of runaway youth were increasingly seen as a social problem unlikely to have a legal solution. Attempts at legal solutions were increasingly seen by researchers and policy makers not be viable, and, in fact, seeming to exacerbate an already confused situation. In 1967, the Task Force on Juvenile Delinquency of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice proposed the decriminalization of status offenses and the diversion of status offenders from court procedures into public and private treatment programs.

There are several reasons why the legal approach has failed the runaway. First, the law is punitive rather than preventive. Youth who are serious runners are likely to be impulsively reacting to a complicated if not abusive situation at home. They are unlikely, at the time of running, to consider the legal consequences of their actions and do not consider themselves, under the circumstances, to be doing something wrong.

Secondly, since the law operates only to force runaways back into a situation they find intolerable, it drives the runaway away from help rather than toward it. Since they are running from the law, they may well avoid local health and social service agencies who might be able to assist, since the provision of service might necessitate contact with parents or police. They can seldom get regular work while running and may feel drawn to elicit activities as a means of support while on the street. Thus, the law is not only ineffective by not being preventive; it is also self-defeating since it may actually encourage more serious delinquent behavior.

Prior to passage of the Juvenile Justice Act of 1974 and its restrictions on

participating states from placing status offenders in secure detention and correctional facilities, it was with regard to the disposition of runaway cases that juvenile law had its most dramatic failure. If a parent refused to take a child back or was found to be unfit, a judge was often forced to place a child in some kind of public facility and too often a detention center or training school was the most immediate, if not only, alternative. This then presented the runaway not only with the difficulties of transitioning to adulthood without a family, but with the added burden of an institutional delinquency label as well.

By 1974, the Congress itself had begun to recognize the detrimental effects of incarceration of runaways and their increasing presence in correctional facilities. Republican Senator Roman Hruska of Nebraska, a strong supporter of the Juvenile Justice Act, noted during Senate debate:

> "Nearly 40 percent of juveniles incarcerated have committed no criminal act. The figure is staggering in recognition of the detrimental effects that incarceration has been shown to produce... (Congressional Record, 1974; S23937).

IV. FEDERAL PUBLIC POLICY AND OUT-OF-HOME YOUTH

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act was enacted in 1974. Prior to its passage, individual states used their own discretion in allocating federal funds for a range of child welfare services including child abuse and neglect. Services for abused and neglected children were extremely inadequate as was demonstrated by very limited resources for investigation of reports, scarce treatment services and limited focus on prevention. Since there was not even one full-time staff person at the federal level assigned to this issue in 1973, the states received no leadership or direction from the Department of Health, Education and Labor.

The passage of the Act was an expression of Congressional concern about the serious nature of the problem and the need for strong federal leadership to address the issue.

Under the Act, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN), located within the Department of Health and Human Services, was established. Funds were provided for two programs to be administered by NCCAN: 1) grants to improve child abuse programs to any state that meets certain standards regarding reporting and investigation procedures, 2) funds to public and private non-profit agencies for research activities and demonstration programs that further knowledge and understanding related to prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect (Washington Report Vol. I, Number I, May, 1984). This legislation has the potential for tremendous impact on child abuse and neglect. It allows for development of community-based programs to prevent abuse and neglect and for developing services for those families at risk or where abuse has occurred. Since running away is often the result of family problems, including child abuse, programs to combat child abuse also impact on running away behavior of youth. While this legislation has

great potential to address both child maltreatment and run away youth, the funding has always been too low to make any serious impact. The FY 1987 funding level is $26 million.

1980 Child Welfare Legislation (P.L. 96-272)

In the late 1970's several studies (Knitzer, 1978 and Shyne, 1978) pointed to severe problems in child welfare systems across the country. The term "foster care drift" was coined referring to children who entered the foster care system at a young age and drifted through the system, remaining in care until adulthood. No clear plans had been made to address the problems that brought the child into care and enable a return to family. The families were forgotten and ignored by the system. States did not even have data on the number of children in care. Recordkeeping was highly inadequate and case monitoring was practically non-existent. Cases of children could easily become lost in the system. As staff turned over, new staff would attend to crisis cases. If a child was not presenting a problem in the foster home, his case might not receive any attention from a worker and the case lay dormant for years.

To address these problems and institute a series of reforms in the child welfare system, Congress passed the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. This law established protections to insure that children would no longer become lost in foster care. It required that if a state was to receive federal child welfare funds, it must establish case review procedures including a six month periodic review by an administrative body or a citizen review board. Additionally each case was required to have a dispositional review by a court within 18 months of placement. The law also required states to establish services to prevent foster care placement where possible, and if placement was necessary, to make services available to reunify foster children with their families. In cases in which

reunification was not possible, a plan was required to establish a permanent and stable living situation, such as adoption or independent living, for the child.

The new law was hailed as landmark child welfare legislation by advocates and professionals concerned about children. It clearly established that children have a need for permanence in their lives and mandated a responsibility for public child welfare agencies to develop permanent plans for the vulnerable children in their care. It also emphasized the importance of using public dollars to support and strengthen families in order to prevent foster care placement. It authorized modifications to the foster care program and a new adoption assistance program under a new part E of title IV of the Social Security Act. Unfortunately, however, Congress never appropriated the full funding that had been authorized for child welfare services under the Act, and it has fallen short of the expectations for systems reform that were raised by its passage.

Social Security Act Titles IV-B and IV-E

Under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act states can claim federal matching funds for the cost of foster care maintenance (room and board), training, and administrative costs of operating a foster care program. States can be reimbursed under Title IV-E only for the portion of their foster care program that services AFDC eligible children. The Title IV-E program was amended by the 99th Congress for FY 1986 to include funding, $45 million, to provide independent living services to assist IV-E eligible foster children to transition from foster care to adulthood. An additional $45 million was authorized for FY 1987 to implement independent living services for this population. The inclusion of funds for independent living services is an important first step. It attests to the fact that Congress has recognized the importance of assisting out-of-home youth to transition successfully to adulthood. The need for service, however, extends beyond IV-E eligible foster

care youth. Funding for services should be expanded to include all foster care youth whose plan is independent living and runaway youth in need of transitional services.

Title IV-B of the Social Security Act authorizes funding for states to provide a broad range of child welfare services exclusive of maintenance payments for foster children. Services must be directed to meeting the goals of protection, prevention, reunification or permanent planning for children. These funds can be used for a broad target population of vulnerable children and are not subject to the AFDC eligibility restrictions that govern the IV-E program. States receive a basic IV-B allotment according to a formula based on number of children under 21 and inversely with average per capita income. Additional funds are available to states that pass a federal review of their compliance with requirements under P.L. 96-272 such as development of case plans, periodic administrative review of cases, and judicial review. Although there are no restrictions preventing the use of IV-B funds for independent living services, most states have had to use this funding to staff up their basic child welfare program, with little remaining for new innovative services.

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974

Passed in 1974, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act has done much to change state and local policy and practice with regard to runaway youth. In Title II, the Act requires that states, within three years after beginning participation, assure:

> that juveniles who are charged with or who have committed offenses that would not be criminal if committed by an adult of offenses which do not constitute violations of valid court orders, or such nonoffenders as dependent or neglected children, shall be placed in secure detention facilities or secure correctional facilities; (Sec. 223(a)(12)(A); P.L. 93-415, as amended)

This provision has been commonly referred to as the "deinstitutionalization of

status offenders" provision and has led to the near elimination of runaways being held in long-term correctional facilities and to a great reduction in their temporary incarceration in adult jails and detention facilities (Krisburg, et al, 1984). Leading to increased use of diversion alternatives by the juvenile justice system, the Act also required that, when status offenders needed to be placed in community facilities (acknowledging that some youth would fare better if simply sent home), that those facilities be the "least restrictive alternatives appropriate to the needs of the child and the community; in reasonable proximity to the family and home communities of such juveniles;" and provide a full range of services. These requirements, in effect, sanctioned and encouraged the use of community-based runaway youth shelters provided for the Title III, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

Title III provided small grants, not to exceed $150,000 per shelter facility, to encourage the development of short-term, nonsecure shelter facilities for runaway and other homeless youth. The purpose of these facilities was to meet the immediate needs of these youth by providing temporary shelter and crisis intervention counseling, as well as aftercare services. Once again, as with other state and local statutes, services were limited to those who had not yet reached their 18th birthday.

In order to receive federal assistance, potential shelters or centers were required to meet a number of requirements:

(1) they were to be located in areas easily reachable by runaway youth;

(2) they were to have a capacity of no more than 20 children, with an adequate ratio of children to staff;

(3) they were to develop plans for contacting the child's parents or relatives (a General Accounting Office survey found that in more than 90% of the cases, shelters were successful in doing so within 24 hours);

(4) they were to develop proper relationships with law enforcement, social

service, and school system personnel; and

(5) they were to develop plans for aftercare counseling for the youths and their parents who lived with the state in which the runaway center was located.

In 1985, HHS, with the $23 million appropriated by Congress funded some 273 shelters around the country, providing overnight shelter to nearly 70,000 youth and drop-in counseling and crisis-intervention services to more that 275,000 others (HHS, 1985, ii). But while annual appropriations for Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs have more than doubled since 1981, (one of the few domestic programs for which this can be said), the number of shelters has not increased proportionately. The Reagan Administration, initially opposed to funding, has generally spent additional monies for demonstration projects and supplemental grants to existing shelters, rather than increasing their number around the nation, and hence their availability to youth who may leave or be pushed from their homes. The authors suspect that federal administrators have been concerned that increasing the number of federally supported shelters would increase their congressional popularity and decrease chances for budget reductions. The program, however, has such strong Congressional support, that for the last three fiscal years, the Administration has given up on proposals to reduce funding.

V. CHOICES FOR FURTHER ACTION

Public Policy

Foster Care

Recognizing the need for improvements in the foster care system and the need to expand the scope of independent living services, child welfare advocates and some members of Congress have worked closely together to plan for further system reforms. A bill, H.R. 2753, introduced by Representative Robert T. Matsui (D-CA) in June, 1987 amends Part E of Title IV of the Social Security Act to make the necessary improvements. These include:

- o Allowing states the option to extend the federal foster care subsidy payment through 21 if:
  - the child is participating in an independent living program
  - a written transitional independent living plan has been or is being developed for the youth
- o Allowing states the option to include in the Independent Living Program any or all other children in foster care under the responsibility of the state.
- o Extends the Independent Living Programs through FY 1989.
- o Adds a new state plan requirement which provides for training and retraining of foster parents and staffs of child care institutions and makes such training a condition for licensing homes and institutions.
- o Requires that in conducting periodic reviews of foster care maintenance payments, full consideration should be given to increases in the cost of providing foster care and in the costs related to the care of children with extraordinary physical and/or mental health needs.

Family Support

The Child Welfare League of America has organized a National Family Support Coalition within its member agencies. The Coalition include both public and private agency representatives and national, state, and local organizations with an interest in family support. The Coalition will be working with other interested groups and members of Congress to design a public policy strategy to expand services that

support family life and serve to prevent problems such as child abuse and neglect, unnecessary foster care placement, and running away.

Juvenile Justice and Runaway Youth

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act will require reauthorization in 1988. Two bills, H.R. 1801 introduced by Representative Dale Kildie (D-MI) and S. 1250, introduced by Senator Joseph R. Biden (D-DE), have already been introduced and would extend the program with few, if any, changes. This reauthorization period, however, does provide an excellent opportunity to make several important changes with regard to runaways and homeless youth facing transition to adulthood.

First, Title II of the Act, with regard to the deinstitutionalization of status offenders, should be changed to require simply the straight removal of status offenders from secure detention and correctional facilities, without the "out" currently in the law which allows judges to incarcerate runners who "violate valid court orders" not to run. This provision was placed in the Act in 1980 following pressure from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. What it basically means is that a youth who runs, is apprehended, is brought before the court and ordered home, and then runs again, can be treated as a delinquent and incarcerated upon second apprehension. It puts a punitive element into a preventive reform and seems to address the needs of the court rather than the youth. Punishing or threatening to punish youth for leaving home by officially removing them from their homes and placing them in secure correctional facilities has no positive impact on the underlying causes of the run and may well exacerbate the problems the youth face as they approach adulthood.

Furthermore, the Congress, perhaps through new authorizations for research through the National Institute of Juvenile Justice, should explore the total

decriminalization of status offenses, as proposed in 1967 by the President's Commission in Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. Through such research, individual states might be encouraged to enact this important reform.

Finally, Title III of the Act, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act should be amended to duplicate the National Statistical Survey required originally in the 1974 Act. It is time to comparatively reassess the national situation and see what impact federal policy has had on the problems of runaway and homeless youth during the past 12-year period. This new survey should also include investigations of "pushouts" and homeless youth as well as runaways.

Program Models

Prevention

Several successful models for preventing the need for out-of-home placement or running away are operating in public and private agencies across the country. Unfortunately, however, these programs are not generally available and operate as demonstrations or pilot projects. The models for keeping families together were operating in the juvenile justice system, the child welfare system, and mental health systems over a decade ago. These programs continue to operate as small scattered projects, usually uncertain of whether or not they will be funded from year to year. They have generally not been institutionalized as a basic component of child welfare, juvenile justice or mental health. Example of successful prevention models are summarized below.

Peer Counseling/Peer Support. The theory behind this model is that adolescents are likely to listen to other adolescents and be influenced by positive youth role models. The peer counseling model involves training a core of young people who reach out to youth in trouble or at risk and provide information and support. The model has been most widely used in drug abuse programs and

adolescent pregnancy prevention programs. The peer counselors are not junior therapists. Rather they are well-informed teens who can provide other teens with accurate information about drugs and alcohol or sexuality or other subjects and can serve as a responsible role model for a troubled youth.

Peer support groups offer an opportunity for young people to share their problems, needs, and concerns with other youth. They learn that they are not alone in their feelings and experiences and can learn from their peers alternative ways of coping with problems in their lives.

Family Preservation. The goal of family preservation programs is to prevent unnecessary foster care placements. This crisis intervention service targets on families whose children are at imminent risk of placement because of child abuse or neglect, serious parent/child conflict, substance abuse or other factors that affect the caretakers' ability to provide adequate care for children.

Family preservation programs generally share the following characteristics:

- o Accessibility--New cases are contacted within 24 hours of referral and seen within 48 hours. Workers are routinely available by telephone and can be called up to visit around the clock. Worker-client contact times are not restricted to business hours or to weekdays--most contact takes place in the family's home or in their community, at the time of day most helpful and convenient to family members.

- o Intensity of service--Workers are available to clients eight hour or more a week. Service are massed during the time of crisis when the potential for change is greatest. Workers carry small caseloads to allow time for intensive work with families.

- o Time-limited and brief--Services to families are of a specific, short-term duration, usually no longer than three months. Performance-based written contracts between worker and clients often are developed. Because families may need episodic rounds of brief therapy and/or support, follow-up services are regarded as integral to service delivery.

- o Designed to deal with diverse families--The client load may include families from rural, suburban or urban areas, families of varying income and educational levels, families with a high potential for violence, as well as families who are confusing and unpredictable.

- o Designed to support the family unit and to protect the well-being of

children--workers are sensitive to the need to help families avoid hurting themselves and others, striving to maintain a balance between child protective and intensive family services.

Typical components of a family preservation program include provisions to meet the family's basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, medical care, etc; on-going family assessment and counseling; supportive services needed by the family such as parenting assistance, household management, life skills training, parent support groups; advocacy with community resources to insure that they respond appropriately to the needs of troubled families.

Day Treatment. Day treatment programs provide social, psychiatric and educational services for emotionally disturbed children and youth. The emotional problems of the youth are exhibited by behavior in school, at home, and in the community. While the youth's problems require more intensive, structured daily attention than an out-patient service can provide, removal of the youth from their family into a residential setting is not required. The family is not neglectful or abusive and is motivated to participate in the youth's treatment process.

Day treatment programs can be used as an alternative to preventing the removal of disturbed youth from their family, as well as a transitional service for youth discharged from psychiatric hospitals or residential treatment centers. They may include a wide range of services such as specialized diagnostic services, individual and family therapy, groupwork, behavior management, special education, art and music therapy, speech and hearing therapy. Programs maintain a strong family orientation and assist parents in resolving family conflicts and dealing more successfully with their children.

The most obvious benefit of this program is that it allows children to live at home while receiving services, thereby eliminating the traumatic effects of separation. It provides the least restrictive setting while making available the full

range of diagnostic and therapeutic services. Day treatment is both a cost effective and less stigmatizing alternative to in-patient care.

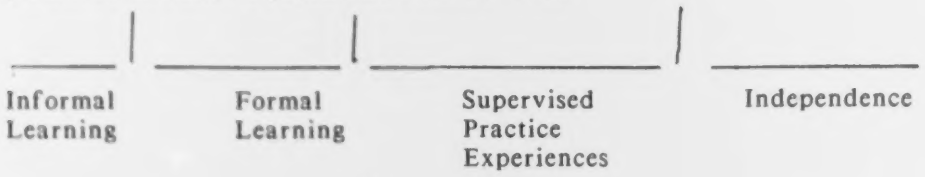
Crisis Intervention and Counseling. Crisis intervention has been a primary model for the delivery of services at runaway shelters and centers. It is based on the premise that individuals may be more prone to take positive actions regarding their lives at moments of crisis. Runaway events produce just such moments. The temporary shelter for the youth involved, when accompanied by crisis counseling, provides a point of leverage which can be used to encourage family mediation between parents and youth which might normally not occur without intervention. Such mediation is in no way encouraged by the juvenile justice system and, in fact, is discouraged by forcing the youth back under parental authority with no negotiation on behalf of the youth.

Independent Living Program Models

Although it is only recently that the development of independent living programs is becoming a major priority for child welfare agencies, model programs have been operating in the more progressive and far-thinking agencies for many years. Within the past five years, independent living services have been broadly recognized as a critical need for foster care youth. Many innovative models developed as demonstration projects and are now being replicated as state and federal funding becomes available.

The term independent living services can refer to a wide variety of programs and services. There is currently no common definition or conceptualization that is generally accepted in the field. There does, however, seem to be growing agreement that independent living services should not be seen as a one-time event or activity. Rather, there are a range of skills and knowledge that a person needs in order to be able to live independently and one can begin to acquire them at an

early age. Therefore, the preparation for independent living can be reviewed as a series of events or experiences occurring along a continuum. the continuum can be conceptualized as follows (Cook and Ansell, 1986):



In this model, skills are acquired both formally and informally. There is a period in which the youth is allowed to practice using these skills while still under supervision, before actually living on their own.

Informal learning occurs while a child observes others, primarily family members. For the foster child, the foster family, group home parents, or child care staff carry the responsibility for role-modeling and teaching.

Until recently there has not been clear or formalized expectations that foster parents or group care providers would provide foster youth with preparation for independent living. Many foster parents taught their foster children as they taught their own children how to become self-sufficient, but this was not always the case. Some departments of social services are now making special efforts with foster parents of adolescents to contract, either formally or informally, for their assistance in teaching the youth life skills, helping with employment related activities, and providing some follow-up after the youth leaves the foster home to live on their own. This may involve special training for the foster parents setting clear expectations about their role, developing a specific contract for the additional services they will provide and establishing an additional payment for these services.

Formal instruction on independent living skills may be part of a child's school program or sponsored by a community organization or recreation program. For example, more high schools are including home management courses which males as

well as females are encouraged to take. Organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA's, YWCA's, 4-H clubs, sponsor programs that help young people learn basic life skills, communication, goal-setting, consumer skills, health care, money management. Several formal curricula for teaching life skills to foster children residing in foster homes, group homes, or institutions have been developed in recent years (Ansell 1983).

Besides learning the practical aspects of daily living, foster care youth must learn to have confidence in themselves and their capabilities. Often these youth, rejected by their families and possibly several foster families have a very poor self concept and low self-esteem. They must be helped to work through the problems of their past before they can successfully plan for the future. They must also learn to build support systems and connect with individuals and community resources. Before discharge, they need to think through what they want in terms of a continuing relationship with their foster parents, birth family, social worker.

Preparing Youth in Foster Care for Interdependent Living (Pasztor, et al, 1987) focuses on issues of self-esteem and connections. This curriculum, recognizing the social isolation and lack of supports for many foster care youth, teaches them how to develop relationships and build a resource network.

Many young people have an opportunity to practice independent living skills, while still under adult supervision. In this situation the young person no longer lives with their family or primary caretakers, but is not yet completely self-sufficient. For many youth the military or college dormitory life are common examples of a supervised independent living experience. For foster care youth supervised apartments or group homes in which residents set the rules, do the cooking and cleaning and contribute financially represent examples of supervised or sometimes termed semi-independent living experiences.

In the last phase along the continuum the youth is responsible for himself. He is no longer financially dependent on his caretakers or on welfare benefits. He lives in the community and is able to access community resources such as medical, dental, recreational, transportation. Often youth in this phase still have the connection to and support of a parent if they find they need help at some time. Foster care youth, however, once terminated from the agency, often have no one they can count on for help.

There is no dearth of models for preparing youth for independence at every stage along the continuum. The technology is available, the programs are operating, we know how to promote self-sufficiency for youth. The problem is that the programs are not widely available. Few agencies have a coordinated system of quality programs at every phase of the continuum available to the youth in out-of-home care.

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VI. AREAS NEEDING ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Research to date on adults who are former foster children follow a similar methodology that causes the sample to be somewhat biased. Criteria are selected such as the time period during which the sample population was in foster care and their age at discharge. A list of case names that meet the criteria are generated and efforts are then made to locate the individuals and elicit their participation in the study. The problem is that those who are able to be located and who agree to participate are likely to be the more stable and successful members of the sample group.

To obtain a more complete and accurate picture of what happens to foster children after they leave the system, a different research methodology is needed. Rather than studies being conducted after the fact, longitudinal studies should be designed that track foster care youth through their transitions and into adulthood. Thought must be given to the types of incentives that are needed to keep the participants involved in the study. Also a broader geographical base than that of previous studies is needed to give a more complete picture of how foster care youth fare after leaving the system.

VII. RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Research

1. The 1976 National Statistical Survey on Runaway Youth, originally mandated by Congress in Part B of Title III of the Juvenile Justice Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-415), should be repeated. The 1988 reauthorization of the Act provides Congress an opportunity to re-mandate this important study which removes many of the limitations in current data pertaining to runaway youth.

2. A federally mandated reporting system should be created in order to collect accurate data on the nation's foster care population and federal funds should be made available to assist states in developing or revising information systems to meet the requirements of the new system. The current voluntary foster care reporting system is inadequate due to differences across states in definitions, reporting periods, and types of information collected.

3. Federal funding should be made available for conducting longitudinal research on the experience of foster and runaway youth in transitioning to adulthood. The research should track youth through their journeys in the foster and runaway service systems, through their periods of transition and on into adulthood. It should include a broad geographical base. This type of research will give a much more accurate picture of the experiences and outcomes of out-of-home youth transitioning to independence.

Policy

1. Renewed official policy consideration should be given to the decriminalization of all status offenses. The punitive sanctions of the law are still as much of a problem as a solution to youth who runaway, are homeless, or are in need of supervision. Decriminalization of these offenses, which are not offenses for

adults, could do much to provide needed services to these youngsters without, at the same time, giving them the debilitating label of "delinquent". The child welfare system would seem to be a far more appropriate location for service delivery, when intervention is appropriate, than the juvenile court, which is better equipped to address the correctional needs of youth who have committed criminal offenses.

2. During the 1988 reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, Section 223(a)(12)(A) of that Act should be amended to prohibit the incarceration in adult jails or other secure detention or correctional facilities of status offenders who violate valid court orders. This would not represent new policy, but rather the return to the original intent of Congress in 1974, when the "valid court order" provision had not yet been included. Giving runaways only the punitive option of returning home or being incarcerated leads to later transitional difficulties and removes the impetus for states, localities, and juvenile courts to develop nonsecure alternatives to incarceration.

3. The number of runaway centers funded under the Title III--Runaway and Homeless Youth Act should be doubled to more appropriately provide access to runaway and homeless youth, especially those living in small- to medium-size cities. Both F.B.I. and National Statistical Survey data indicate the rate of arrest and the rate of running is as high or higher in small- to medium-size cities as in large urban areas. Furthermore, data indicates that most youth run less than 10 miles from home. While Congress doubled the appropriation for Title III in 1982, the Administration has failed to increase the number of runaway and homeless youth centers proportionately. At least one runaway

center for every 500,000 population grouping would be a fair goal. (This would be approximately equivalent to one center per Congressional District.) Service programs for the elderly (area agencies on aging) and the poor (community action agencies) have even more widespread dispersal around the country.

4. Federal foster care policy should be changed to allow financial reimbursement to states for foster care services to be extended to youth through age 21 if the youth is enrolled in an educational, training, or independent living program.

5. Federal policy should be changed to extend financial reimbursement to states for independent living services to all foster care and runaway youth up to age 21 in need of transitional services.

6. State foster care policy should include:

   - o individual independent living plans and services to implement the plans for all foster care youth who will live on their own after discharge;
   - o provisions for an aftercare period prior to case closing during which services are provided to assure a successful transition to independence.

7. The Vocational Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 93-516) should be amended to make foster care youth eligible for post-secondary and college educational assistance. Clearly, young, 18-year-old youth without family assistance of any kind, will have a difficult time financing college and post-secondary education and training, which will have much to do with their future success and productivity. Foster care youth should know early in their academic careers that, if they prove capable, the opportunity for a college education or post-secondary training is assured.

Programs

1. During reauthorization of the Title III--Runaway Youth Act, runaway and

homeless youth centers should be specifically required to provide access to independent living counseling for youth in the areas in which the center is located and should be allowed to provide this counseling to youth up to age 21 on a non-shelter-resident basis. Individual runaway centers have begun demonstration activity in the area of independent living services. It is time for those demonstrations to be replicated in all centers.

2. Youth should be involved in decision-making about their lives, including placement decisions, and educational and career planning.

3. Child welfare agencies need to collaborate closely with educational systems to improve educational outcomes for foster children. Academic potential needs to be assessed, expectations about educational achievement need to be clearly communicated to foster youth and their caregivers, remedial educational services need to be readily available, problems need to be identified early and addressed.

4. A high priority must be placed on the selection and training of foster parents and reimbursement fees or salaries should be sufficient to attract highly qualified people as applicants. The quality of foster parents will determine the quality of the foster care experience for the child.

5. The concept of paid specialized foster care should be extended to enable foster parents to provide a stable environment for a child who will remain in care through ages 18 to 21 and provide continuing support to the youth after discharge from the system. As the pool of foster parents has been rapidly diminishing over recent years, creative ways to revamp the foster care system are needed. Specialized foster care in which qualified foster parents are paid a

salary commensurate with the employment market appears to be a promising solution.

6. Child welfare supervisors should hold MSW degrees and child welfare workers should at least have BSW degrees with experience. Only qualified professionals should be allowed to practice in child welfare. Child welfare workers have responsibility to make decisions that can completely alter the course of a child's life.

7. Contacts with biological parents, siblings and relatives should be facilitated even if the youth will not return home. Family members can still function as resources and supports to the youth after discharge from foster care or aging out of the runaway youth system.

8. Every effort should be made to keep to a minimum the number of different living environments a child will experience while in foster care. Better assessments of foster children and youth are needed early to determine appropriate placements.

9. A comprehensive array of services and activities designed to prepare foster and runaway youth for independence should be readily available including informal and formalized training, assistance in career planning and supervised practice experiences. Preparation for independent living should be seen not as a single event or program, but as a series of events or activities that start at an early age and teach various skills that are refined throughout life.

10. For foster children who will remain in foster care until age 18 or beyond, a specific plan should be developed with the youth that sets educational and career goals and methods to achieve them. This plan should be reviewed

periodically with the youth and as part of the periodic review system for foster children.

11. A plan for post discharge services and social support should be developed for every foster youth transitioning to independence. The plan would indicate how continuing needs for health care, counseling, income, living arrangements, etc. would be met. The worker would be responsible to see that all appropriate referrals and financial arrangements were made before discharge. Additionally the worker would be responsible to insure that an adult would be available to act as a resource for the youth for information, emotional support, and guidance. Relatives, foster parents, volunteers or organizations such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Foster Grandparents, or Associations of Former Foster Children would be potential resources.

12. Both secondary and post-secondary school programs should develop courses on parenting, including specifically interpersonal communication skills, with widespread application to all students. While financial stress and personality may contribute to family conflict, the National Survey on Runaway Youth indicates that some behaviors and skills which can be learned, can contribute much to family cohesion and preservation.

VIII. NOTES

1. The official definitions of a runaway within the Uniform Crime Report is "limited to juveniles (persons under age 18) taken into custody under provisions of local statutes."

2. Attorney General Edwin Meese, in a recent report on Missing Children, referred to runaways and missing children as having a "right to custody."

3. These estimates are based on 11,249 reporting police agencies reflecting a national population of 203,035,000. The estimate of 161,200 runaways nationally was based on a larger sample.

4. The Uniform Crime Report included a category for suburban arrests which included suburban city and county law enforcement agencies within metropolitan areas. It excluded core cities. Suburban cities and counties were also included in other groups.

5. Section 223 (a)(12(A) of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act reads:

> In accordance with regulations the Administrator shall prescribe, such (State) plan shall--
>
> (12)(A) provide within three years after submission of the initial plan that juveniles who are charged with or who have committed offenses that would not be criminal if committed by an adult or offenses which do not constitute violations of valid court orders, or such nonoffenders as dependent or neglected children, shall not be placed in secure detention facilities or secure correctional facilities;

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

JOY DUVA is the Director of Family Preservation for the Child Welfare League of America. She also serves on the National Family Support Coalition. Ms. Duva has had over 15 years experience in social services at local, state, and national levels. She earned the Master of Social Work degree from Fordham University.

Prior to joining the League, Ms. Duva was the Director of Child Welfare Services for the State of Maryland and administered statewide programs, including foster care, adoption, protective services and family services. She was a member of the Governor's Task Force on Adoption. Earlier in her career as Resource Director for the Military Family Resource Center, Ms. Duva assisted the military branches in developing family service programs.

GORDON A. RALEY is an Assistant Executive Director of the American Vocational Association (AVA) and heads its Government Relations Department. AVA, with a membership of over 46,000 secondary and post-secondary teachers, administrators, researchers, and guidance counselors, helps vocational educators and institutions provide effective programs that prepare students for work.

Raley has been involved in youth programs at both the local and the national level for the past 16 years, including eight years as Staff Director for the U.S. House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Human Resources, which has jurisdiction over federal juvenile justice and runaway youth programs.

He also served as senior staff associate for the National League of Cities and United States Conference of Mayor's Criminal Justice Project, a criminal justice and juvenile delinquency planning program.

Raley holds a bachelor's degree from Baylor University and a master's degree in community organization and planning from Tulane University. He was an Institute of Politics Fellow at Loyola University, New Orleans.

Raley has authored several articles, primarily on social problems facing youth. He is a steering committee member of the Juvenile Justice Key Decision-Maker Project, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, and serves on the National Advisory Board for the National Resource Center for Youth Services at the University of Oklahoma.

A COMMENTARY

on **Joy Duva and Gordon Raley's**

TRANSITIONAL DIFFICULTIES OF OUT-OF-HOME YOUTH

by **Eileen M. Pasztor**

Never before has the child welfare/juvenile justice field had to face a client population as difficult to serve as the youth in out-of-home care today. They usually come to our attention because they have endured the physical and emotional pain of abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and abandonment. Most of them have such a combination of physical, emotional, social, and educational needs that no single person or agency can meet all their needs. Thus, it is critically important that the issues regarding the planning and delivery of services to this group be brought to the attention of wide range of the country's best "thinkers and doers." The working paper, "Transitional Difficulties of Out-of-Home Youth" by Duva and Raley, helps examine many of the factors that should be considered in determining more effective policies and program planning for this population.

The purpose of this commentary is to assess the contributions of that report. To aid the understanding of the issues and the recommendations proposed by the report, this commentary is divided into two parts. The first part provides a general response, emphasizing the report's strengths and areas in which additional substantiation might be helpful. The second part presents additional issues for consideration.

In reading this commentary, please note that it reflects the perspective of experience in the field of foster family care, residential care, and adoption. Therefore, the following information is directed to those aspects of the paper that relate primarily to foster care youth and the child welfare system.

General Response

It is evident that policy and program planning cannot be considered, nor can there be any meaningful inquiry into the circumstances of American youth, without first answering three questions: why are out-of-home services needed for some youth? What is the definition of the term "youth?" And what is the demographic profile of youth needing out-of-home care? A major strength of the paper is the way in which it answers each of these questions.

First, the authors provide a clear framework for considering the problems of the target population, by reminding any of us who may have forgotten that the transition from adolescence to adulthood is difficult for most youth. Despite conflicts with adults, most young people recognize that parents and families provide tremendous support for those transition years. In fact, a common complaint from many parents today is that the high cost of housing and college, combined with difficulties in finding employment for young people, means they cannot get their children to leave home. For young people, who have been rejected by their birth, foster, and/or adoptive families, "ejection" from the child welfare system is a painful reaffirmation of their sense of lack of worth and, as the authors state, that families just "don't work."

Secondly, the authors remind us of the difficulties in defining the term "youth." It is convenient to use chronological age for policy and program development, but for this target group, such arbitrary decisions are particularly inappropriate. Readiness for independent living requires a combination of resources that typically take almost two decades of living in the same family to acquire. While most of us are learning daily skills such as counting money, planning meals, and developing self-confidence (because we had a piggy bank, we went shopping with our parents, and we felt safe to make mistakes and try again), these youth have many barriers to the stages of learning referenced by the

authors.

For example, these youth probably were living in chaotic or dysfunctional families in which managing meals, shopping, money, sexuality, and relating to others in the community were handled inappropriately. They may have been living with neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse; so all their energy was directed to dealing with those problems instead of learning new skills and acquiring resources. When they experience multiple placements - or disruptions, which is the more accurate word - most of their energy is directed to dealing with losses and moves instead of learning skills. Also, since different families and group settings teach different ways of behaving, young people become confused about what is "appropriate."

Youth in out-of-home care are like jig-saw puzzles with pieces scattered everywhere. One piece of them may be chronologically 18. However, if they have never learned to trust, their "emotional piece" may be functioning at an infantile level. According to the authors' excellent demographic information, the "academic piece" of these youth tends to be considerably delayed. Also, because of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, improper diet, and deficient medical and dental care, their "physical piece" may not look or feel well. Obviously, the more these "pieces" can be integrated, the more the "puzzle" will fit together. It is unrealistic to expect that a lifetime of fragmentation can be "put together" in a short while. Clearly, chronological age has to be the least important factor to consider in transitional planning for youth in out-of-home care.[1]

A third major contribution of the paper is its summary of state and national reports describing what these young people "look like." The policy and program issues seem to jump off the page when framed with the question, "What kinds of 24 hour substitute care, and social, mental health, medical, and educational vices

are needed by large number of youth who have "psychiatric symptoms?" (And we should remember that every young person in out-of home care has to be in some stage of physical and/or emotional stress due to the conditions requiring placement.)

How are youth helped to build trusting relationships when most of them have had serial caseworkers and multiple foster families or even adoptive families? How can youth maintain contact with their birth mother or fathers when the attitudes of foster care workers and fosters parents often discourage child-parent contact?[2]

Another of the report's contributions is its discussion of the findings from the Westat study. Entry into foster care is usually unplanned, chaotic, traumatic, and hurtful. Exit from from foster care should be planned, stable, calm and helpful. The Westat study indicates that, in many instances, the exit is not much different from the entry. Another important point by the authors is emphasis on using caution when assessing the results of studies of former foster children. The Zimmerman study and the Rest and Watson study are, like the Jones and Moses Study, less optimistic than the information cited.[3] It also may be helpful to talk with representatives from the growing National Association of Former Foster Children.[4] In addition, the report gives examples of the critical service delivery problems caused by increasing needs (the fragility of the clients) and decreasing resources (qualified numbers of casework staff and foster parents, available emergency shelters, etc.)

One way to make the paper more helpful would be to explain the value base and conceptual framework for permanency planning as the driving force for policy, program, and practice considerations. The description of child welfare services as defined in federal legislation does not mention preparation for independent living as an explicit goal. Also, more current definitions of foster care

include three critical points. First, foster care is protective family service designed to help not only children but also their parents in an endeavor to keep families together. Second, time in foster care should be "extended" only after every attempt has been to make it temporary. Third, the first goal in out-of-home care case planning is family reunification; then adoption; and then, for older youth for whom return home or adoption is not an option, placement out of the system with some definite connection to a natural helping network.[5]

It would be helpful to give examples of how "problems are shared openly with the community with the recognition that solutions depend on community involvement." As stated earlier, the needs of these youth require a considerable network of services that can come only with community support. There is no lack of data to tell us what is wrong; we lack the development and dissemination of community-supported models to tell us what works.

The summary of the federal programs could be strengthened by explaining why the funding of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 is inadequate and how it is forcing states to provide services based on a triage system, serving only those youngsters who are "too young to run" to avoid abuse or neglect. It would be helpful to have examples of the problems encountered when only some foster care youth are eligible for IV-E independent living funds, such as foster parents who are frustrated because only some of the youth in their home are eligible for certain services, creating additional family/agency conflicts.

Comments about the authors' choices for further action and policy and program models, areas needing additional research, and research, policy, and program recommendations are included in the next section.

Additional Issues for Consideration

As we consider the sometimes overwhelming issues related to planning for the needs of older youth in out-of-home care, we should remember that, ironically,

some of our current problems result from significant accomplishments. In the past decade, we have made great strides in placement prevention, family reunification, and special needs adoptions. We have demonstrated that parents previously considered "unworkable" could be worked with, and children previously considered "unplaceable" could be placed. As a result, children and youth now entering or staying in out-of-home care are those youngsters who are far too emotionally damaged and/or medically physically handicapped to remain in their home or to be adopted.

Therefore, it is not just that we need more services and resources, such as more foster parents and more caseworkers. We need a different conceptual framework with different services and resources since, for example, more unqualified foster parents and more unqualified caseworkers are not an answer.[6] Duva and Raley present a comprehensive list of research, policy, and program recommendations. As this list is evaluated, several critical issues should be considered.

First, the concept of helping youth transition to "independent living" has unrealistic and negative connotations. No one lives independently because we need other people for support, direction, information, and basic physical and emotional nurturing. Youth who have been rejected by birth, foster, and adoptive families, as well as by other "mainstream" social network, are at risk for continued social and emotional isolation. Such isolation may result in continuing dependence on social welfare, mental health, or correctional systems, or a strong drive to remain isolated from any helping networks.[7]

Therefore, programming youth to prepare for independent living sets up the unrealistic expectation that they should not need help from others. The child welfare field has a history of placing the burden for change on youth, e.g. the expression "hard to place" child instead of "hard to find" families.

"Independent living" also puts the burden for change on youth, rather than viewing it as the shared responsibility of policy-makers, practitioners, and others. Instead of "independent living," we should use the term "interdependent living." "Interdependence emphasizes the importance of connectedness to families and friend; skills in making and keeping relationships; and more opportunity to have a place one's community."[8]

Second, this concept also helps us remember that planning for interdependent living requires much more than helping young people learn to manage daily tasks such as using public transportation, cooking, and balancing budgets. Work with older youth in out-of-home care first requires helping them develop a more positive self-concept to enhance emotional readiness to learn new skills. A major task for youth in care is to develop psychosocial coping strengths and understanding the conflicts which brought them into care. Youth cannot mobilize the energy to move on with their lives when they still are grieving over their past. Young people first need to understand the steps that brought them into foster care before they can learn the steps to move successfully out of care.[9]

Agencies that rush to form youth groups or supervised apartment living to teach "tangible" skills often overlook the fact that many of the skills associated with preparation for interdependent living painfully touch upon feelings of loss and the initial placement experience. Filling out job applications upset youth who have not been prepared to answer question such as "list the schools you have attended," or "list the next of kin not living with you in case of an emergency." Youth who have little birth family information, or records of their own medical history, are likewise distressed when they cannot complete medical or insurance forms. Therefore, it is critically important that agency staff, and especially foster parents and child care workers, understand this dynamic and recognize that youth who appear to "lazy" or "unmotivated" may,

instead, reflect a lack of emotional readiness to learn how to move forward.[10]

A third critical issue is "to remind ourselves that placement is a drastic measure taken only out of utter necessity because a child is in grave danger if he or she is not removed. It is an enormous risk. When children and youth are removed from their parents, we are taking a stand that the trauma of the separation and moving in with strangers is less severe than the trauma of remaining at home."[11]

When courts or agencies separate children and youth from their parents, they assume the obligation to fulfill these youngsters' basic right right to a nurturing and caring environment that can help them rebuild relationship with their parents, or build relationships with other nurturing adults. These relationships must be intended to fulfill "the continuing need of each human being to belong to a family.... a family that provides the opportunity to establish life-time relationships."[12]

The case plan goal of "transition to independent living" does not adequately reflect a permanency planning value unless that plan includes steps to help youth leave out-of-home care with what are called the "nine essential connections:" a place to live, a history, a system of values, a source of income, a source of joy, information, belonging to a group, having a role, and a tie with a significant person.[13] Programs often endeavor to connect youth only to a place to live and a source of financial support and then assume their work is done.

Foster care is forever. The experience remains with someone for his or her entire life. We are just now beginning to understand the full impact of grieving over family separation and foster care placement. Youth have to be prepared for this process, how it can affect them, and how they can get help through information and support. Most of us stay connected to our families of origin and, when we have problems, we turn to them for information and support.

However, if our parents turn out to be an agency that replaced our birth parents and a court that sanctioned that replacement, to whom do we return for information and support....especially when it regards our past? What policies and programs do these "substitute parents" have to maintain continuity for youth in out-of-home care?

Considering all the research, policy, and program recommendations proposed by Duva and Raley, as well as the above issues, it seems that the place to begin is with a new definition of the purpose of out-of-home care. We should remember that foster care was originally created as a service to rescue "good" children from "bad" parents.[14] The early "placing out" programs served young, dependent children whose only "problems" were presumed to be absent parents. The program goal was "adjustment to placement" and continued foster care. Foster families were required only to be caretakers; their qualifications were simply parenting experience and good standing in the community. Now, however, everything about out-of-home care is different: the purpose and goal, the clients, and the responsiblity and accountability of child-placing agencies staff to do more paperwork than casework.[15]

Also, foster care traditionally has been viewed as a step in a continuum between home-based services and adoption. Out-of-home care has to be fully-developed as support services to home-based and protective services, adoption programs, and to help older youth move into interdependent living with those nine "essential connections" established. As a support service, it has to include unequivocal policy and financial support for change in the role and skills of its front line service providers: the caseworkers, foster parents, and child care staff who most directly affect the quality of life for youth in out-of home care.

The need to clarify the role of foster parents has been the subject of debate for almost 50 years as the field has struggled to decide whether the

foster parent is a "colleague, a client, or something in-between."[16] Foster families have to become professional resources for two reasons. First, the needs of youth are so great that we cannot expect persons "off the street," with only their own life experience, to know how to manage the emotional and behavioral problems referenced by Duva and Raley. The pain that is felt by youth in out-of-home care, reflected in their behaviors, if not in their words - cannot wait to be met by a foster care worker who visits monthly or by a therapist during a "50 minute" hour at a weekly session. These needs must be met as they occur, which is usually on a daily basis. Since no one has more daily contact with youth than foster parents, foster parents must be completely prepared to meet their needs.[17]

Secondly, the traditional foster family - with a wage-earning father and an at-home mother - willing to use its own time and financial resources to supplement the most of child care, as noted by the Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators in their 1987 program on out-of-home care, is vanishing species. To compete with the record numbers of working-for-wages women, the stresses of single parents and blended families, the high cost of housing, and the lack of available day care, professionalizing the role of foster families support, resource, or connector families seems the only alternative.[18]

There is evidence in the literature that such a payment system, which would be attached to a defined role and specific tasks and goals, produces more effective outcomes for children and families; it also may reduce the high incidence of abuse in foster family care.[19] A recent state study of approximately 500 foster parents indicates that foster parents' identification with a permanency planning role, instead of parenting role, is associated with permanency planning outcomes for children.[20] The Texas Department of Human Services in the greater Houston region currently is conducting a federally-funded

research and demonstration project to investigate the impact of community support on the recruitment and retention of foster parents as partners in permanency planning. The results of this study should be carefully considered.

A number of models already exist in which foster families are functioning in support of family reunification or adoption. "Partnerships in Parenting Toward Family Reunification" is a research and demonstration program with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services Designed to provide a model for foster parents teaching skills to birth parents. The MAPP Program, developed by the Child Welfare Institute in collaboration with the North Carolina Department of Social Services, the Texas Department of Human Services (greater Houston Region), and the Massachusetts Department of Social Services, helps prospective foster parents and adoptive parents support the value and learn necessary skills to support partnerships among birth parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, and child welfare staff.[21] The new national curriculum, Preparing Youth in Out-of-Home Care for Interdependent Living, teaches foster parents, child care staff, and foster care workers how to help youth become emotionally ready to learn new skills, how to help youth establish "essential connections," and how to prepare youth for developmental grieving. These programs clearly mark a more professional role for foster parents.

Since foster care workers are the chief support of foster parents, their skills also have to change. They have to know how to consult and collaborate with foster parents. In a state study of more than 500 foster parents and caseworkers, there was virtually no agreement between the two groups on responsibilities for specific permanency planning tasks.[22] Since the role of foster parents remains undefined and since bureaucracies usually do not encourage staff to work interdependently, it is not surprising that teamwork is more the exception than the rule.

Also, the requirement of BSW and MSW degrees for child welfare staff is not a solution unless many more schools of social work begin to teach contemporary child welfare practice through a solid child and family services concentration. Another issue is that today's child welfare staff seems to be more fragile. A subject of increasing concern among national child welfare trainers is the frequency with which staff break down in experiential training activities. What emerges is the impact of their own personal losses from divorce, infertility, sexual abuse, family death, etc. on their ability to work with clients.

The burden for change cannot be placed solely on front line staff. Supervisors, managers, and administrators must take responsiblity for setting clear standards, providing role models, and supporting their staff. More training is not a solution. Training is only as effective as the policy that supports it and the supervision that reinforces it. There must be financial incentives and reasonable caseloads to change foster care casework from a position low-status to a position of high-status, personal, and professional rewards.

In summary, it just is not possible even to begin to deliver adequate services unless the persons who have the most contact with clients are prepared and reinforced for their work. We cannot say we value families for children when disturbed children and youth are removed from one set of dysfunctional parents and placed with unskilled, unsupported families served by unskilled, unsupported caseworkers.

In the classic text, The Art of Child Placement, Charnley recounts the parable of "The River of Adolescence."[23] She explains that "once upon a time..." there were two villages: the Village of Childhood, and Village of Adulthood. They were separated by a wide, treacherous river called the River of Adolescence. Everyone began in the Village of Childhood. However, there was a strong

motivation to make the crossing to the Village of Adulthood.

Charnley remarks how it was interesting to watch how different individuals made the crossing. Some would put in a toe and think, "No, it's too cold, deep, etc." and wait a while longer. Others would swim out some distance and think, "Perhaps I had better go back and try again some other time." Others just jumped right in and swam across without too much difficulty. And, of course, there were those who never attempted the crossing and spent their whole lives in the Village of Childhood. There was a way, however, in which the crossing always was made easier, however. That way was when persons from the Village of Adulthood, who had successfully made the crossing, came back across the river and swam along with the first-time crossers.

To effectively deliver services to older youth in foster care, we need policy makers, administrators, community leaders, resource families, public and private agency social service staff, judges, and educators who perceive a value to swimming on the same team and in the same direction. Determining that direction is the next most critical step.

Eileen Mayers Pasztor, MSW, ACSW, is a child welfare associate with the Atlanta-based Child Welfare Institute's National Resource Center for Foster and Residential Care, working from its Washington area office. She received her B.A. from Stanford University; an MSW from Ohio State University; and is a DSW doctoral candidate at The Catholic University of America, investigating foster parent ownership of permanency planning tasks.

Ms. Pasztor is experienced as a foster care and adoption caseworker, supervisor, program administrator, adoptive parent, and foster parent of teens. She is experienced in parenting children who come from residential treatment facilities and in preparing youth for interdependent living. As a trainer, consultant, and conference speaker, Ms. Pasztor has spoken with more than 5,000 foster care service providers throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas.

Ms. Pasztor received national recognition as the principal developer of the Nova model of foster family recruitment, selection, and training. More recently, she has developed the new MAPP Program for the joint preparation and selection of foster families and adoptive families as partners in permanency planning. She was co-director of Project Stepping Out, one of the first independent living research and demonstration projects in the country. She is principal developer of two new national training manuals on the role of foster parents in preparing youth for interdependent living and foster parents as role models for the parents of children in foster care.

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COMMENTARY

on **Gordon Raley and Joy Duva's**

TRANSITIONAL DIFFICULTIES OF OUT-OF-HOME YOUTH

by **Peter R. Correia III, M.S.W. and Anita Fream, M.A.**

The need to prepare young people for adulthood has been recognized in one way or another for centuries. In the past, apprenticeships or indentures were used to place many adolescents into job training situations in which the mentor was expected to provide the youth with shelter, food, and training in exchange for free labor.

More recently, in the United States, social programs were designed to provide for homeless children. These ranged from the large orphanages of the early part of this century to so-called "free homes," the forerunners of modern foster care. At this time, orphanages often placed their older charges as maids or housekeepers to facilitate their transition into the working world.

During and after World War II, however, social reformers became increasingly aware that many children in placement were not simply in need of shelter. Often, these youth were characterized by behavior problems and nonconformance (Stone, 1987). Such youth needed a wider range of services than the old style orphanages were able to provide. In the 1950's and 1960's halfway houses and group homes sprang up across the country in an attempt to meet this need (Stone, 1987).

Today, group homes and foster care remain two major resources for youth in out-of-home placement. However, the range of services provided to youth in these placements is often inadequate to prepare them for living on their own as adults.

Duva and Raley analyze some shortcomings of the present child welfare and juvenile justice systems in providing for this population of children. Theirs is an insightful and thought-provoking paper that deserves the attention of all professionals in this field. Especially strong are sections outlining difficulties in data collection, contributing problems in the child welfare and

juvenile justice systems, and runaway youth profiles.

As the authors suggest, a national mandate on data collection for children would be a boon to research efforts in this field. Without such a mandate, there are often major differences in how individual states collect information, making it very difficult to compare data or compile national statistics. Duva and Raley do an excellent job of clarifying for the reader the shortcomings of the information they present and of compiling into readable form what data is needed.

The authors also present a realistic picture of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Because funds to both these already over-burdened systems have shrunk in recent years, the tendency has been to focus on protective services at the cost of preventive services. At a time when the need for foster homes is increasing as a result of the rise in abuse and neglect cases, the pool of available foster parents is shrinking. Staff turnover in both systems is high as employees struggle with huge caseloads, inadequate resources, and poor salaries. While many states require aftercare services for youth leaving the system, such contacts are often minimal or non-existent as workers must focus their time on more pressing crises. These conditions no doubt contribute to the multiple placement syndrome, in which children drift from one foster home or emergency shelter to another, with frequent short stays at home in between.

Runaways, too, are often lost in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems because providing services to this population is difficult and may seem less critical than protecting abused children. It is difficult to estimate the number of long-term runaways in this country, but Duva and Raley present what information is available in clear and concise form. They also address a major problem in the juvenile justice system: the punitive nature of the system's response to running away, as well as to other status offenses. As the authors suggest, the current law, which allows for the incarceration of youth who violate

valid court orders not to run, drives youth away from help. Family problems are the most often cited cause for running away. A system that attempts to force runaways back into an intolerable living situation or risk incarceration does not support runaways who need help.

The basic natures of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in this country are changing. In 1984, 275,000 children were in the child welfare system in the United States. Of these, approximately 40 percent were between the ages of 13 and 20). Approximately 16,000 of these adolescents were discharged from the child welfare system in 1984 because they had reached the age of majority (Tatara, 1985).

As these statistics indicate, a growing proportion of the children in foster care today are adolescents, the age group for which it is most difficult to find permanent homes. Child welfare agencies are faced with rising numbers of adolescents in care and the responsibility to provide cost-effective services ensuring that, upon discharge, these youth can obtain housing and employment, maintain positive social relationships, and perform necessary daily living skills (Westat, Inc., 1986).

As Duva and Raley point out, most 18 year-old youth from stable two-parent homes would have difficulty surviving on their own if suddenly turned out upon their birthdays. However, this is all too often what is expected of older adolescents who have been reared in much less stable circumstances.

A study by Festinger in 1975 (cited in Stone, 1987) sought to discover what services the child welfare system should provide to help youth in out-of-home placements prepare for independent living. The young adults interviewed listed their priorities for the services they felt agencies should provide to transitional youth: 1) job preparation and counseling; 2) money management; 3) help arranging further training or schooling; 4) assistance in finding a place to live; 5) counseling on growing up, especially sexuality; 6) marriage and

parenting classes; 7) advice on arranging medical care; and 8) instruction in daily living tasks (Stone, 1987).

Contrast this list of client-centered needs with the services actually offered to transitional youth (in a 1986 study cited by Duva and Raley):

Of 18 potential independent living services, the most prevalent received was psychological counseling (45%). Only four other services had been provided to at least 35% of the youth, including information about relationships and social skills (39%), job search information (39%), sex and birth control information (37%), and budgeting skills (35%).

While some of the services provided overlap with the Festinger list, there appears to be a large difference in priorities between agency providers and youth consumers. This discrepancy should be further investigated and addressed in recommendations for agency policy.

The National Resource Center for Youth Services staff have found that more and more public child welfare agencies are struggling to provide services to the adolescents in their care. They are often ill-equipped to handle this population since the whole delivery system is geared to handle younger children. Adolescents need a host of services that are not readily found in the traditional child welfare system. Learning to live independently is a lifelong process, and the child welfare system has not focused on the development of the skills which promote self-sufficiency in those children who are exiting the system.

Older adolescents who are about to leave the child welfare system need assistance with the entire range of skills listed by the youth in the Festinger study: employment, money management, education, housing, and medical services. Most child welfare agencies are not used to working with outside agencies in the coordination and delivery of these needed services. Agency staff need preparation and training in the coordination of services, and in working with adolescents.

Although Duva and Raley cite a few statistics relating to minority youth, the paper could be strengthened in this area. As the authors note, the percentage of minority youth in both the child welfare and the juvenile justice systems is disproportionately large. Of the 276,000 children in the foster care system in the United States, 46 percent are minorities; their proportion in the general population is 17 percent. Past studies have revealed that minority children often remain in foster care longer and are less likely to return to their families than are white children (Hubbell, Hirsch, Barrett, Condelli, & Plantz, 1986). As an example, a recent Virginia study reported that black children in foster care in that state remain in care an average of 2.6 years longer than do white children (Children's Defense Fund, 1986).

The picture is the same in the juvenile justice system. In 1977, minorities represented 45 percent of incarcerated youth. By 1982, that figure had risen to 53 percent of youth confined in public correctional facilities (Krisberg, Schwartz, Fishman, Eisikovits, & Guttman, 1986). Minority youth are incarcerated at rates three to four times that of white youth. For minor offenses, the probability of a black youth being arrested is seven times that for a white youth (Krisberg, Schwartz, Fishman, Eisikovits, & Guttman).

Duva and Raley provide insight into the juvenile justice system with this quotation from the Congressional Record: "Nearly 40 percent of juveniles incarcerated have committed no criminal act. (emphasis added) The figure is staggering in recognition of the detrimental effects that incarceration has been shown to produce...." This statistic, in combination with those cited regarding minority youth, make it imperative that we address the plight of minorities involved in the juvenile justice system. The figures suggest that many minority youth are doomed at an early age. Without a good foundation, it is very difficult for minority adolescents to become productive, self-sufficient members of society.

A Congressional study (cited in Youth Policy, January, 1987) revealed that the unemployment rate for minority youth is 38.3 percent, compared to 18.7 percent for white youth. In some inner cities, the figure is closer to 50 percent (Children's Defense Fund, 1986). It is very difficult to prepare minority adoelscents for their exit from the juvenile justice or child welfare system with such unemployment prospects.

The minority population in the United States is increasing. By 1992, one in every three American workers will be a minority; by the year 2000, Hispanics will be the largest minority population in this country (Hodgkinson, 1986). Any programs or policies designed for juveniles must take these figures into account. Increasingly, we are relying on minority youth to be the future workers of this country. We cannot afford to fail them in providing the services necessary to prepare them for self-sufficiency and independent living.

Duva and Raley speculate briefly on the causes of minority youth's plight. However, with greater numbers of minority youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, future research should include investigation of the reasons for minority youth's disproportionate representation in these systems. Additionally, we must also address what special needs must be met for minority youth to prepare them for successful exit from the systems.

The recommendations set forth by Duva and Raley are timely and much-needed reminders of our inadequacies in serving youth in out-of-home placements. These recommendations would be further strengthened with the addition of research into issues related to minority youth and innovative program designs for minority youth. The National Resource Center for Youth Services strongly supports the passage of a national Younger Americans Act which would assure that the recommendations by the authors are achieved.

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Peter R. Correia III, M.S.W., is the Assistant Director of the University of Oklahoma's National Resource Center for Youth Services. He has over 10 years' experience in the areas of child welfare and youth services. His particular expertise is in the areas of preparing adolescents for young adulthood and developing and delivering services to minority youth and their families. He also conducts workshops and delivers keynote addresses around the country on issues pertaining to child welfare and youth services. Mr. Correia received his Master's of Social Work from the Boston University School of Social Work. He is also the coordinator of the Center's national summer training conference. Published articles include "Black Family Research: A Review," and "Where Is the Black Runaway?"

Anita Fream, M.A., is a Program Development Specialist and an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Human Relations with the University of Oklahoma. She teaches both graduate level University courses and continuing education seminars. In her work for the National Resource Center for Youth Services, Ms. Fream designs and writes curricula and other training materials. Ms. Fream received her Master of Arts Degree from the University of Oklahoma in Human Relations, with a specialization in Professional Psychology. Her experience includes direct service provision to children, adults, and families as a therapist in a family counseling agency and in a state psychiatric hospital for children. In addition, she has designed and implemented extensive inservice education programs for various child-serving agencies.

Ms. Fream has an extensive knowledge of the juvenile justice system, especially as it relates to children with emotional or developmental problems. Her publications include: Understanding Child Development (volume four of a five-book series); "Behavior Modification" (a chapter in Teaching Discipline); "Project BOLD: A Therapeutic Camp for Youth and Professionals;" and "The OU Juvenile Personnel Training Program: A Cooperative Program that Pays Off."

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